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PERSONALIZATION FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS AT A SMALL CONVERSION HIGH SCHOOL

A Dissertation

Presented to the

Faculty of

San Diego State University and the University of San Diego

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor

of

Education

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by

Mary Jewell

Fall 2006

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Personalization for English Learners at a Small Conversion High School
by
Mary Jewell
Doctor of Education
San Diego State University-University of San Diego, 2006

One of the most notable ways in which large, comprehensive high schools are working to meet the needs of the increasing numbers of English Language Learners (ELLs), and other students who may be struggling with academics, is by subdividing into smaller schools. One of the most appealing features of small schools is their emphasis on personalized instruction for students. While it takes many forms, *personalizing education* means knowing all students well and designing curriculum that meets their individual needs. Personalized learning environments hold enormous potential for improving the educational experiences, and even very lives, of English learners.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the extent to which English Learners at a small conversion high school received personalized instruction, and the extent to which this personalization contributed to meeting students' psychosocial and academic needs. The study focused on one small conversion high school in a large city in southern California. Of the total school enrollment of approximately 500 students, 74% are (ELLs).

Data were gathered through five months of classroom observations, student and school staff interviews, and review of school records. Data analysis identified several themes, including: differing expectations about personalization on the part of teachers, the principal and students; the way in which the school structure contributes to a personalized environment, instructional strategies related to personalization and meeting the needs of ELLs in the content area classroom; an ethic of care on the part of the teacher, and professional development. Recommendations that emerged from the study focus on the need to re-evaluate teacher certification requirements, the reorganization of the school structure, the development of a counseling program designed for ELLs, and the need for relevant, ongoing professional development.

This study can contribute to the limited s research available on the potential of small schools to successfully educate English Learners. The findings of this study also provide fertile territory for further exploration of many areas related to small schools, personalization, and English Learners. Potential research could contribute to what is known about teacher motivation, effective content-area instruction for ELLs, teacher training and hiring, and school organization, all within the environment of the small school.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document is the result of a collaboration of many hearts and minds. The past four years have been lonely at times, and filled with crushing amounts of work. But they have also reaffirmed my belief that the love and support of those close to you are as necessary to success as are intelligence, self discipline, and passion for your work.

Bob, Cathy, and Mom, thank you for your help with the logistical demands of attending classes and meetings, and for alleviating my guilt at not always being there for Marco. To Marco, thanks for all of your patience while I was on the computer or reading my books at the park. I have a lot more time to play Legos and dig in the sand now. Michelle, I appreciate your constant encouragement and understanding of the long silences. I can't even begin to express my gratitude to you, David, but I think you know.

Thanks also to my peers in the joint doc program, especially Marci. I appreciate your willingness to read draft after draft, provide feedback, and commiserate through the really tough times. To my committee, your confidence in me was unnerving at times, and I know I could not have gotten through this without your guidance.

To my students, who inspire and teach me everyday. Your persistence and enthusiasm in the face of incredible obstacles are an example to everyone. Thanks also to the staff of my school, who allowed me to visit their classrooms, and who patiently answered my endless questions.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The world has changed immensely in the last half-century. We have put human beings on the moon, developed the Internet, and created and dissolved entire countries. Everything has changed, it seems, but the American public high school. In much the same way they did in the 1950s, students still shuffle through crowded hallways to sit passively in a succession of classrooms each day. They endure lectures about information that is not related to their lives, complete work that is either too difficult or not challenging enough, and feel little personal connection to their teachers or loyalty to their schools. This traditional model persists, despite mounting evidence that it is not successfully preparing our young people for higher education and employment. Many students score poorly on national and international achievement tests (Grosso de Leon, 2002), and the national public high school graduation rate is only approximately 70% (Hoff, 2006). Clearly, schools are struggling to meet the increasing demands of a rapidly changing world.

One of the most significant challenges high schools must address in this changing world is the increasingly diverse student population. Approximately 10% of all public school students today are English Language Learners (ELLs), an increase of about 44% in just the last decade (U.S. Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition [OELA], 2005). High schools are struggling to educate this growing, changing population. Students born outside of the United States who attend high school in the US take less rigorous coursework, score lower on tests, and drop-out of high school before graduating more often than native-born students (Harklau, 1999). Though exact figures vary, it is estimated that nearly half of all US high school students who were born outside of the United States will drop-out of school before graduating (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999; "State and district patterns," 2006; Tabarrok, 2001).

This high dropout rate has dire economic and social consequences for the United States. Adults who have never completed high school earn far less money over their lifetimes, contribute less to the tax revenue of the United States, are sick more often, go to

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prison more frequently, and are less likely to vote than are high school graduates (Cheeseman & Newburger, 2002; Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, & Thompson, 2004; Olson, 2006; Secada, 1998). The economic and social health of our country, and even our very democracy, depends on an educated populace.

The educational community has responded in several ways to the poor academic performance of ELLs. Teacher education programs have been redesigned to provide inductees with the pedagogical, cultural, and linguistic knowledge and skills to address a diverse student population (Dong, 2004; Duran & Dugan, 1997; Grant & Wong, 2003; Tellez, 2004). To ensure teachers have high-level content knowledge in their subjects, federal No Child Left Behind legislation requires that all teachers be credentialed in the subjects they teach (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Many states, including California, have introduced new certification requirements for teachers of ELLs (*Serving English learners*, 2006).

(See Appendix A for definition of terms relevant to this study.)

At the local level, districts and schools have implemented bilingual education, immersion, and transitional programs in an effort to develop students' literacy skills in English and in their native languages (Bahamonde, 1999; Flood, Lapp, Tinajero, & Rollings Hurley, 1996/1997; Thomas & Collier, 2003). Schools are also devoting significant time and resources to improving parent and community involvement at school, so that parents, other community members, and teachers can work more closely together (Honig, Kahne, & McLaughlin, 2001; Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999). These methods are attempts to help students become successful within the established educational system, while other approaches try to reach beyond the school.

Some educators and educational philosophers advocate facilitating students' academic development so that the students can use their new-found skills and knowledge to improve their communities. The role of this critical pedagogy, as described by Freire (1970; 1973) and others is to raise students' consciousness about their economic, cultural, and political status, which will motivate them to employ their education to challenge the dominant power structure that is oppressing them. Related to this idea of challenging the existing system is the concept of *educational equity*. Advocates of many school reforms cite unequal access of some groups of students, such as English Learners, immigrants, and others,

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to a rigorous education as a major reason for these students' poor academic showing (Ayers, Klonsky, & Lyon, 2000; Ready, Lee, & Welner, 2004; Rumberger & Gandara, 2004). They believe that the educational system must be reformulated to provide these students with the same opportunities to learn challenging, college-preparatory material as white, middle class students have. In other words, "schools should not transform the social differences students bring to school into academic differences" (Ready et al., 2004, p. 2010).

At the other end of the spectrum, Arizona, California, and other states have passed laws eliminating bilingual education in an attempt to accelerate English acquisition ("English for the Children", 2002). Anti-immigrant groups seek to seal the US borders and exclude undocumented immigrants from schools and other public services (Federation for American Immigration Reform, 2005). Still, with more than one million legal immigrants admitted to the United States every year (National Clearing House for English Language Acquisition [NCELA], 2005), and many more coming without legal documents, schools must find a way to educate ELLs successfully.

One of the most notable ways in which large, comprehensive high schools are working to meet the needs of these ELLs, and other students who may be struggling, is through the creation of smaller learning environments. Numerous terms are used to describe these smaller settings, including *small schools, small learning communities, houses, academies, families,* and *school within a school.* For the purposes of this study, the term *small schools* will be used to refer to all of these smaller environments. One of the most appealing features of small schools is their emphasis on personalized instruction for students. While it takes many forms, *personalizing education* means knowing all students well and designing curriculum that meets their individual needs. Personalized learning environments hold enormous potential for improving the educational experiences, and even very lives, of English learners.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Regardless of any political debate, the many immigrant students are here to stay, and schools must find a way to educate them effectively. The move toward small schools at the high school level shows tremendous promise for helping English Language Learners perform academically. However, there is little evidence that the enormous sums of money and

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resources being devoted to redesigning schools are creating effective learning environments for the rapidly growing numbers of ELLs.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which ELLs at a small conversion high school receive personalized instruction, and how personalization meets their psychosocial and academic needs.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will help resolve the scarcity of research available on the potential of small schools to educate ELLs successfully. In an era when all students are expected to achieve, regardless of their language, racial, or socioeconomic background, the educational system must thoroughly understand the contributions that small schools can make to improving the educational experience and achievement of English Language Learners.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How is *personalization* of the educational experience for English Language Learners defined and operationalized by a small conversion high school?
2. What structural or operational features of the school contribute to or hinder the development of personalization?
3. What is the nature of the relationship between personalization and meeting the academic and psychosocial needs of English Language Learners?

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CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The first section of this literature review includes information about the psychosocial and academic needs of ELLs. Because redesigning school in order to meet the needs of a diverse population requires a change in the traditional educational system, the next section of this chapter will examine the literature related to educational change. The final section of the review examines how the teachers in an existing small schools work to personalize their learning environments to address the needs of ELLs.

PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS OF ENGLISH LEARNERS

The teenage years are trying for anyone, but the difficulties are often multiplied for immigrants and English Language Learners. Their unique psychosocial needs must be addressed if these students are to succeed academically. While a lengthy discussion of any needs hierarchy or the psychology of motivation is not appropriate for this study, it is common sense that a young person concerned with family conflict, economic security, or other problems may have difficulty concentrating at school. The next section will explain how immigration issues, cultural conflict at home, isolation from peers, and difficulty with teachers can complicate the ELL's plight at school.

IMMIGRATION

When immigrant children leave their home countries, they leave behind everything that was familiar, including their language and culture (Ioga, 1993; James, 1997). Many are living without one or both of their parents, and far from much of their extended family. They must adapt to a new culture, language, and school system, as well as struggle with the normal challenges of adolescence. "Adolescents are affected significantly (by immigration) because in addition to adapting to a new society, they also must cope with the psychological, physiological, and hormonal changes that accompany the transition from childhood to adulthood" (James, 1997, p. 98). The conflicts of this transition are often magnified by the

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generalized culture shock and family separation issues that normally accompany immigration.

CONFLICT AT HOME

Many immigrant families also experience conflict at home as their students become acculturated to the US. The values that prevail at home and those in the new setting may conflict, and students may begin to lose their home language. Often, they lose the ability to communicate with grandparents and other family members (Olsen, 2000). Many families are headed by single mothers who must work long hours, further increasing stress and the potential for conflict. As students learn English, often faster than the parent, adults may find their authority over their own children has lessened. "A healthy sense of identity is important during adolescence. For immigrant adolescents and adolescent children of immigrants, development of an ethnic identity is complicated by acculturation and intergenerational conflict" (James, 1997, p. 97). Immigrant students and English Language Learners must therefore manage family and cultural issues in addition to the normal stresses of adolescence.

MAKING FRIENDS AT SCHOOL

These students also experience the challenges of school on many levels. "For culturally diverse children, especially those from poor, immigrant families, going to school is a daily struggle, and succeeding in school is a daunting task" (Zhou, 2003, p. 219). Many ELLs feel their language ability and immigrant background profoundly affect their social lives and ability to make friends (Harklau, 1999; Olsen, 2000), so important in the lives of adolescents. ELLs are often segregated from native English speakers their age. If they are in classes with their English-speaking peers, they may be laughed at, ignored, or provided limited opportunities to interact on a social level. This lack of acceptance, combined with the high mobility rates of immigrant families, may create a sense of loneliness and isolation, further compounding the students' academic efforts (Short, 1999). In addition, immigrant children living in the inner city often suffer from racial profiling and negative stereotypes attached to urban youth (Zhou, 2003). Clearly, immigrants and ELLs have a great deal to contend with that can interfere with their academic performance.

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DIFFICULTY WITH TEACHERS

The disconnect between teacher and student cultural background can also complicate the immigrant student's educational experience. Teachers who are not sensitive to the typical learning styles, communication patterns, and values of their students' cultures may misinterpret student behavior. At the same time, students unfamiliar with the common procedures and classroom expectations of US schools are definitely at a disadvantage, since they cannot rely on their knowledge of the context of the situation to fill in gaps in understanding rules or content (Short, 1999). Schools and teachers must make these procedures and processes obvious to students. In addition, teachers must design language instruction that is sensitive to students' needs and learning styles.

Further, educators at all levels must carefully consider their political and social interactions with ethnic and language minority students. Students who are made to feel as if they must surrender their language and culture to those of the United States may experience additional difficulty in school. On the other hand, "Educators who see their role as adding a second language and cultural affiliation to their students' repertoire are likely to empower students more than those who see their role as replacing or subtracting students' primary language and culture" (Cummins, 2001, p. 182). The attitudes and behaviors of the teachers, then, can make either a positive or negative impact on the ELL's experience at school.

CARING

In part because of conflicted relationships with school staff, many language and ethnic minority students feel alienated and devalued by the educational system. They are often not motivated to do the hard work of school, or endeavor to overcome the other social and cultural challenges they encounter, when they feel as if no one cares whether they succeed. These students need and want to feel *cared for* by their teachers before they can *care about* schooling (Valenzuela, 1999). Students who know their teachers care about them are more likely to perform academically than are students who feel they are simply names on a roster (Sergiovanni, 2001; Whitney, Leonard, Leonard, Camelio, & Camelio, 2005/2006). Noddings (1992) argues forcefully for this ethic of care in stating, "the school cannot achieve its academic goals without providing caring and continuity for students" (p. 14). This caring school, and the caring teachers within it, are willing to continually make the effort to meet

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the needs of each child (Noddings, 2001). Quite simply, for young people to succeed at school, the school must see them as more than just students, and make efforts to treat them as individuals.

Addressing these psychosocial and cultural needs of English Language Learners and immigrant students, then, is a crucial element in their educational experiences. In addition to these non-language issues, however, ELLs must also receive instruction that can meet their language acquisition and content-area needs.

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND INSTRUCTIONAL NEEDS OF ENGLISH LEARNERS

There is general consensus in the language acquisition community that the most effective forms of language instruction in schools are those that focus on communication of real information that has value for the learner, rather than on grammar or memorization of vocabulary (Crawford, 2003; Cummins, 2004; Krashen, 1983, 1987; Lapp, Flood, & Farnan, 1993; Mora, 2003). Hones (2002) found that students were limited by language teachers who focused on the grammatical forms of English rather than on the messages that those forms communicate.

BICS AND CALPS

To facilitate the acquisition and transmission of these messages, students must be provided content they can understand in a low-risk environment, as well as the time they need to process the new language. According to Krashen (1987):

> The best methods (of language instruction) are therefore those that supply 'comprehensible input' in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear...recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing and correcting production. (p. 7)

Cummins (2004) emphasizes a "focus on message, focus on language, focus on use" (p. 25). Students also need ample practice and feedback, authentic tasks, and continuous evaluation (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002; Hudelson, Poynor, & Wolfe, 2003; Mora, 2003). When exposed to these methods, students can learn the conversational aspects of language, commonly referred to as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), relatively quickly. However, it takes much longer for them to master the academic, or Cognitive

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Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), elements of a new language. According to Cummins (2004), "Conversational aspects of proficiency reached peer-appropriate levels usually within about two years of exposure to L2 but a period of 5-7 years was required, on average, for immigrant students to approach grade norms in academic aspects of English" (p. 3).

CONTENT-AREA INSTRUCTION

At the same time they are learning conversational and academic English, students must also be exposed to challenging content-area curriculum, both in English and in their native languages (Cummins, 2004; Hones, 2002; Hudelson et al., 2003; Runfola, Carolino, Lara, Pande, & Spaulding, 2003). This access to the other subject areas allows them to both improve their English and develop their content knowledge and skills. Cummins' (1980) theory of the "Common Underlying Proficiency" states that "experience with either language can, theoretically, promote the development of the proficiency underlying both languages" (p. 131). Conceptual understanding in the student's first language helps to make input comprehensible in the second language. For example,

> an immigrant student who already has the concept of *justice* in his or her first language will require considerably less input in the second language containing the term to acquire its meaning than will a student who does not already know the concept. (Cummins, 1991, p. 171)

CONTENT-AREA STRATEGIES

In subject-area courses taught in English, ELLs "must master not only English vocabulary and grammar, but also the way that English is used in academic subjects" (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006, p. 199). For example, students must learn to negotiate the text features and organization of a textbook, the manner and format in which academic tasks are to be completed, and the verbal competency required to articulate their questions and learning process. Teachers must design their content-area instruction to support students in this complex process. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) (J. Echevarria & Short, 2004), which is used as a data collection instrument in this study, provides an easy to understand list of 30 strategies teachers can employ to make content-area information comprehensible to English Learners.

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Explicit teaching of formal, academic language, as well as instruction in learning strategies and metacognition, are also necessary for ELLs in content classes (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994). Further, schools and teachers must provide vocabulary development activities (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005), instruction in use of text features and genres to enhance content-area reading comprehension (Schifini, 2002), and support in writing development (Fearn & Farnan, 2001). Even before they are fully competent in English, ELLs must continue to develop their content-area skills and knowledge. Thus, they need high quality content-area instruction that takes into account their language needs.

PROGRAMMATICALLY

In addition to these pedagogical aspects of instruction, schools must also consider the overall design of their bilingual/English as a Second Language /English Language Development programs. Several studies have examined the elements of effective language programs and concluded that certain programmatic elements are critical for the academic success of ELLs (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002; Hones, 2002; Hudelson et al., 2003; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Mora, 2004; Romo, 1993; Runfola et al., 2003). These characteristics include appropriate placement and assessment of ELLs, a strong counseling program, a variety of challenging coursework in the students' native languages, and professional development that is explicitly designed to help teachers and other staff serve language minority students. Schools that are able to meet ELLs' social and educational needs, both at the classroom and at the programmatic levels, have been shown to better prepare students for mainstream classes, higher education, and the world of work. ELLs must therefore be placed in a program that addresses their language and content instructional needs and strengths, as well as meets their non-academic needs.

Addressing these unique needs of the ELL, at both the psychosocial and instructional levels, requires a shift from the traditional instructional model of high school. Schools must be redesigned to respond to their unique student populations, and educators must rethink their beliefs and classroom behaviors. The next section of this literature review will outline the relevant research related to educational change.

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EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Despite ongoing attempts to reform or restructure the educational system, most elements of the traditional high school have remained the same for decades. Numerous authors provide explanations for the reasons that educational reform on a large scale just has not worked. For Sarason (1990), educational reforms fail because they do not reconsider the power relationships between and among students, teachers, administrators, and policy makers. Lipman (1998) maintains that most educational reforms only perpetuate the power and privilege of the white middle class student, thereby ignoring the very students who are most in need of a new experience with school. For Fullan, Hargreaves, and others, educational change often fails because policy makers, school administrators, and others in positions of authority do not address the culture or the structure of the school, or the emotional and intellectual demands of meaningful change. (Fullan, 1997b; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001; Lipman, 1998; Sarason, 1990). Any meaningful educational reform, then, must involve changes to both the beliefs and behaviors of the institution and the beliefs and behaviors of the individual (Richardson & Placier, 2001; Wagner & Kegan, 2006). The next section will present the relevant literature on institutional and individual change.

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

For the purposes of this study, the terms *organization*, *institution*, or *system* will be considered the school site. As Pink and Noblit state (2005) "for schools to change in significant ways there has to be both dramatic and deep alterations in school cultures and structures" (p. 17). A capable leader to focus and manage the change is also critical for the success of any major change. The following paragraphs will discuss the structural, cultural, and leadership aspects of institutional change.

STRUCTURAL CHANGE

Changes in the organizational or physical structure of the school must be based on what is best for teaching and learning, and the unique needs and context of the school (Richardson & Placier, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2001). Merely rearranging superficial aspects of the school master schedule, course offerings, or other technical issues will not bring about change unless the new structures will facilitate better instruction and other attention to

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student learning (Feldman & Lopez, 2004). Teaching and learning must remain at the center of any technical or operational changes.

CULTURAL CHANGE

For Hargreaves (1997), "Culture is central to the life of schools" (p. 66). *Culture* refers to the values, and behaviors, and ways of life of a group of people. Any meaningful change to the school site must address these beliefs and ways of doing things.

> Cultures of teaching affect the actions of teachers in significant ways. They affect how teachers approach and define their work, how they respond to change, and how much agency they feel they have in making a difference in the lives and futures of their students. (Hargreaves, 1997, p. 68)

Changing the structures of the school without *reculturing* toward the new issues will not produce meaningful, lasting change. Since school culture can have a significant impact on student learning, addressing cultural issues must be a central aspect of any major educational change. Structural change can sometimes lead to cultural change, but issues of culture must be specifically addressed for any change to have real impact (Pink & Noblit, 2005).

LEADERSHIP

Critical to restructuring and reculturing the organization is a strong leader with a clear vision of what the change will look like. Fullan (1997b) is emphatic on this point, stating "Nothing is more important and more elusive than the role of leadership in educational reform" (p. 85). This leader must be able to work with all stakeholders to clarify their collective vision of the change, ensure the change is communicated to all involved, facilitate the hard work of implementing the change, and provide material and professional support for those involved in the change effort (Schwahn & Spady, 1998). Encouraging teachers to work together (Cushman, 1993; Fullan, 1997a), managing the competing school and district demands, and developing their own capacity for leadership are further demands on the change leader (Neufeld, Levy, & Chrismer, 2005). Finally, the leader must contribute to the development of a new culture at the school that both supports, and develops with, the new structures and goals of the reform (Hargreaves, 1997).

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INDIVIDUAL CHANGE

For any institutional change to have an impact on the school culture and student achievement, teachers must also change their beliefs and behaviors, thereby making the change their own. Fullan (1997b) eloquently explains that any lasting educational change must involve more than just skill development or a change in procedures. Teachers must have a true commitment to the work. "The combination of heart and head is crucial to effectiveness" (p. 291). Implementing the change at the classroom level requires far more than teachers attendance at workshops; they must believe in the change, and have the support necessary to take the risks involved in changing (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996).

Adopting the change is not a one-way relationship, though, as widespread change is a socially constructed phenomenon (Hubbard, Mehan, & Stein, 2006, p. 9). School staff both adapt to the mandated change, and modify the change to fit the established rules and routines of the school. Even if a clear vision for the change is shared by all involved, the reality of the reform will reflect the unique needs and character of the school. "But neither the caring needed nor the learning needed can be easily packaged, scripted, and imported. Both must emerge from the school's own sense of what is important...and from other cultural concerns that provide a school with character" (Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 79). Effectively educating ELLs within the regular content-area classroom, therefore, requires a clear vision of what that type of instruction will look like, as well as the flexibility to adapt the instruction to the school context.

Any type of reform to the traditional schooling experience then, involves changes at the level of institutional culture and structure, as well as in individual behavior. Schools must be redesigned so that the structure, instructional practices, and support services address the new issues of the student population. Led by a competent, passionate change agent, teachers and other school staff must work together to ensure their beliefs, behaviors, and the school structure meet the unique needs of the students.

SMALL SCHOOLS

A redesign of the traditional institution of the American high school is one of the most drastic changes being considered to help ELLs and other underperforming groups achieve academic success. Most of the restructuring efforts focus on the creation of smaller

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school units. Nearly all of the existing small schools enroll far fewer students than are present at a comprehensive high school, usually less than 500 students. Most of these schools also possess a structure that permits interdisciplinary coursework, flexible student placement, unique course offerings, and internships or other real-world connections. Often small schools are also physically separated, to the greatest extent possible, from the other small schools that may share the same campus or complex. In many areas, small schools operate with more autonomy than traditional schools in the same district.

TYPES OF SMALL SCHOOLS

An important distinction must be made here about the differences in "small" schools (Ready et al., 2004). Some schools that enroll fewer than the comprehensive high school are small by default, due in large part to their rural locations. Others are "created small" by a group of educators dedicated to a common purpose or theme. These schools are often located in office buildings, store-fronts, or other non-traditional settings. Frequently they enjoy more flexibility in hiring staff, course offerings, assessments, and schedules than do the traditional schools in the same district. Still others are "conversion schools," in which a large comprehensive high school has been redesigned into smaller, autonomous units. These types of schools normally enroll the same students, employ the same teachers, and use the same resources as were present in the previously existing large school. Because of these carry-overs, conversion schools also often inherit the organizational structures and cultures of the previously existing comprehensive school (Feldman & Lopez, 2004).

BENEFITS

Numerous empirical studies have suggested that small schools can help improve student achievement, reduce discipline problems, increase graduation and college attendance rates, and foster a closer connection between school and the world of work (Cotton, 1996, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2002; Howley, Strange, & Bickel, 2000; Lee, Smerdon, Alfeld-Liro, & Brown, 2000; Meier, 1996; Raywid, 1999; Vander Ark, 2002). Small schools also have the potential to improve the school experience for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds in particular (Cotton, 2001; Ready et al., 2004), making them especially promising for ELL students. "When implemented thoughtfully by schools that are educated about the needs of language learners, restructuring efforts hold great promise for changing

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American high schools in ways that will offer linguistic minority adolescents significantly enriched contexts in which to learn" (Harklau, 1999, p 57). Smaller schools can also reduce the inequities in students' academic programs that are often found in a large comprehensive high school. The reduced enrollment and course offerings at a small school mean that "students are more likely to share common social and academic experiences, and learning is less likely to be stratified based on students' social and academic characteristics" (Ready et al., 2004, p. 2005). Small schools, then, have the potential to meet the psychosocial and academic needs of English Learners, and facilitate their academic success.

DRAWBACKS

Though small schools demonstrate potential for meeting the needs of a diverse student population, they are not without their detractors. Students and parents have complained about the reduced curricular choices normally offered at a small school (Silverman, 2006). Teachers have lamented the extra non-classroom work that often accompanies the reduction of support staff found at smaller schools, and the lack of common planning time to coordinate and implement new procedures and instructional approaches (Neufeld et al., 2005) They are sometimes also asked to teach several different courses each day, or teach elective classes that are out of their credential areas in order to accommodate the constrained master schedule in place at many small schools (Neufeld et al., 2005). Perhaps most importantly, achievement test scores have not improved much at small schools (Greene & Symonds, 2006). Despite this evidence opposing the small schools movement, the development of small schools continues to be viewed as a viable educational reform.

PERSONALIZATION

One of the most appealing features behind the dramatic increase in the popularity of small schools is their emphasis on personalized instruction. The overarching tenet of personalization is the emphasis on relationships, and the benefits to students those relationships can confer. Personalized schools focus on the development of relationships among students and between teachers and students (Hoffman & Levak, 2003). Through these relationships, adults and students can work together to design an educational experience that best meets students' needs, which can ultimately improve students' academic performance. Knowing students well also allows the adults at school to effectively push students farther

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and higher than would have been possible without a close relationship (Sizer, 2004). Many small schools facilitate personalization through differentiated instruction, advisory periods, interdisciplinary teaming, smaller classes, looping, and internships. The next section will explore each of these areas.

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

Successful small schools utilize close connections with students to personalize the instruction students receive, essentially individualizing or differentiating the instruction to meet the needs of the individual learner. Differentiated instruction can be defined as "ensuring that what a student learns, how he/she learns it, and how the student demonstrates what he/she has learned is a match for that student's readiness level, interests, and preferred mode of learning" (Tomlinson, 2004, p. 188). In a differentiated classroom, students of varying strengths and interests work at different levels and on varied tasks related to the same theme or concept. Activities, assessments, direct instruction, and finished products are designed by both teacher and students to address each student's unique needs (Betts, 2004; Tomlinson, 1999). Traditionally applied to both gifted and special education students, differentiated instruction also has tremendous potential to meet the needs of ELLs. Teachers who have utilized their close connections with students to learn their language and social needs can customize instructional practices, assignments, and student groupings to maximize skill and language development (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 51-52).

The Met School in Providence, Rhode Island, is one small school that nurtures these close relationships to differentiate instruction in several ways. Knowing students well enables the staff to personalize each student's educational program to the needs and interests of that student. Students work on a plan of individually designed curriculum and projects, and collaborate with their peers in small classes. They meet regularly with their parents and teachers to update and modify this individualized plan as needs and interests evolve (Levine, 2002; Pearlman, 2002). Staff and teachers also make the extra effort to visit kids at work, check on them at their internships and jobs, and get to know the students' families. English Learners could greatly benefit from this personalization strategy, since staff and students could continually modify the tasks and expected outcomes as students' language proficiency develops.

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BLOCK SCHEDULING

Block scheduling is a more widely-used strategy many small schools employ to personalize instruction. In a block schedule, students normally study fewer subjects each day, but spend more time in each class. This extended time allows for more in-depth curricular investigation and cooperative group work (Marchant & Paulson, 2001), and enables students and teachers to get to know each other better. Teachers can use this extra time and enhanced relationship to design instruction that meets students' individual needs and interests, further personalizing the curriculum. Block scheduling also reduces the number of students and teachers any one student interacts with each day, allowing students to connect more fully with their teachers and peers (Kerr, 2002). This increased time to master content and skills, work on differentiated assignments, and along the way develop English proficiency, could also contribute to increased academic success for English Learners. Closeness with classmates and teachers could also help alleviate the isolation and other social difficulties ELLs often experience.

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAMING

Many of the existing small schools, such as High Tech High in San Diego and the La Guardia Community College International High School in New York City, also employ interdisciplinary teaming within their block schedules ("The International High School", 2004; Levine, 2002; Pearlman, 2002; Toch, 2003). Interdisciplinary teams provide staff with opportunities to combine their diverse knowledge and varied perspectives to develop innovative, challenging curriculum that encompasses more than one content-area. Students use the longer class time of the block schedule to conduct research and complete interdisciplinary, individualized projects that often contain elements of all of the content disciplines. This type of personalization and the differentiated instruction that can result allows students to gain a deep understanding of topics that are important to them. This rigor and relevance, as well as the additional time for study of key academic terms in English, can also greatly enhance the language and content skills of English learners.

ADVISORY

Advisories are another common means of personalizing a student's educational experience. Advisories may take the form of a regular class period, or a teacher who works

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with a specific group of students but does not have these students in class. The purpose of an advisor-student relationship is to ensure the every student is known well by at least one staff member (Manning & Saddlemire, 1998). Advisors normally provide academic tutoring and college advisement, as well as a sympathetic ear for students to talk to about dealing with the stress of adolescence (Pearlman, 2002). Effective advisors go well beyond the traditional student-teacher relationship, taking personal responsibility for their group of students (Nadelstern, 2004). Advisors visit their students at their jobs, supervise internships, attend student extra-curricular activities, and even invite students to share meals and holidays with their own families (Antrop-Gonzalez, 2003). These close relationships, made possible by structural and classroom organization as well as by individual effort, enable the advisors to continually modify students' educational programs, giving a truly personalized experience. The cadre of advisors and other adults who watch over students in small, personalized schools can also head off some of the academic and discipline problems difficult family and immigration situations often engender.

SMALLER CLASS SIZES AND LOOPING

Smaller class sizes and looping, sometimes employed at small schools, are also ways to ensure that students are known well by their teachers and that they follow a program that is right for their individual needs. Smaller class sizes tend to be more common in schools that were created small than in conversion schools. District staffing or space allocations normally do not change when a large school converts to smaller units, so class sizes remain about the same, or even larger in some cases (Neufeld, Levy, & Chrismer, 2004). In small classes, students receive more personal attention and feedback from the teacher in a smaller class, and students often work together more effectively. Teachers can capitalize on this extra contact to employ materials and design instruction and assessment that meets each student's personal language and curricular strengths and needs.

In a looping system, teachers usually remain with the same group of students for at least two years. Denault (1999) cites numerous studies suggesting looping allows for the creation of more trusting, academically productive relationships between teacher and students, and increased student achievement. These long-term relationships enable students

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to feel more comfortable with the teacher and with their peers, enabling teacher and students to focus on skill development and instruction that is right for each student.

The in-school structures of individualized learning plans, block schedules and interdisciplinary teaming, advisories, and smaller classes and looping can thus facilitate the differentiation of the educational experience and the creation of close bonds between teacher and students. Schools can capitalize on these structures and relationships to address and meet the psychosocial and language needs of their English Learners. Schools can also extend this experience beyond the school building.

INTERNSHIPS

Many small schools further personalize and differentiate school by providing students the opportunity to participate in real-world internships outside of school (Levine, 2002; Pearlman, 2002). These internships are based on the students' interests, and students often arrange their own internship placements. Allowing students to spend time outside of the classroom in a unique setting in which they are interested serves several purposes. Students are engaged in a very personalized experience, since each internship is unique. They also begin to see the connections between the skills they learn at school and their personal interests, and the world of work. Most importantly for ELLs, internships provide opportunities for students to learn language that is of immediate use to them.

These personalization strategies can enable students to develop their academic and language skills without the pressure to transition to the regular classroom before they are ready, which almost guarantees failure. Sizer (2004) eloquently describes this gradual transition in the metaphor, "Let them learn to swim in warm-water pools tended by lifeguards...rather than hurl them early and unprotected into a cold and crashing surf" (p. 16). Only in a small, personalized learning environment can the teacher know students' language strengths and weaknesses, and differentiate instruction to meet each student's needs. When teachers utilize their personal relationships with students for improved design of instruction, and when the school structures support the language and social needs of ELLs, these students are bound to benefit.

This study will examine the experiences of Summit High School's students and teachers in light of this information on the diverse needs of English Learners, the

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characteristics of small schools, and the many types of effort involved in meaningful school reform.

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research questions guiding this study can be most effectively answered through a qualitative research design. According to Creswell (1998), "Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding...that explores(s) a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, ...and conducts the study in a natural setting" (p. 15). The educational experience is of course both social and human, and must be analyzed in the natural setting of the classroom. This chapter presents the methodology and instruments used during the study. It also provides extended descriptions of the school and the participants. This rich description is necessary to provide an accurate portrayal of the context of personalization at Summit.

CASE STUDY

This study followed a collective case study approach. A case study is "an exploration of a 'bounded system' of a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (Creswell, 1998 p. 61). A collective case study "is one in which multiple cases are described and compared to provide insight into an issue" (Creswell, 2002, p. 485). This detailed context and description of the experiences of several students and teachers is necessary to understand how, or if, students experience personalization of instruction within the complex context of the classroom. As Yin (1993) notes, "The case study is the method of choice when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context" (p. 3), and when the "context is hypothesized to contain important explanatory variables about the phenomenon" (p. 31). Personalized instruction can only be observed and understood within the context of the entire classroom experience. The data gathered from multiple observations and interviews allowed me to paint a picture of *personalization* as it is experienced at Summit.

This study was bounded in several ways, a critical element in a case study. All participants were members of one small conversion high school, and all students involved

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were classified as English Learners. The study focused on their experiences of just one area of school during one semester, not every aspect of their educational experiences during all of their schooling.

Data were generated from observations of students in their classrooms, student and teacher interviews, an administrator interview, record review, and researcher reflection.

THE SCHOOL

Summit is one of six small schools located on the campus of what was, until 2004, a large comprehensive high school in southern California. Because the comprehensive high school failed to improve its test scores for three consecutive years, the State of California pressured the School District to make changes at the school or face sanctions. The District and the school administration at the time, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, decided to divide the school into six smaller, autonomous schools of approximately 500 students, each with a separate theme. The small schools collectively are known as the Complex.

The redesign effort was approved by a majority of then-current staff. Staff met monthly to plan and prepare for the redesign. Teachers already assigned to the comprehensive high school had priority in obtaining positions at the new smaller schools, though all staff had to re-apply for their jobs, indicating, at least in theory, their support for the reform. Students already enrolled in the comprehensive school were given a choice of which of the small schools they wanted to attend the following year. Student choice was mediated to ensure a balance of racial and gender equity at each school.

At the redesigned Complex, students take all of their courses at their own small school, and interact with students from other small schools during the common lunch period and through extra curricular activities and sports. All schools offer core classes such as English, math, and science and highlight the individual school theme through electives and interdisciplinary projects. Business, technology, and communications are among the themes offered at the schools. Each of the six schools also has its own administrator, teaching staff, course offerings, and, to the extent possible, physical space. However, each small school is subject to the same credentialing, accountability, and other requirements as every other school in the district. Campus security, the library, the nurse, athletics, and custodial services

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are shared throughout the Complex. Site principals meet regularly to discuss common issues and sharing of resources.

The decision was made during the planning phase that all students taking English as a Second Language classes would attend Summit for the first year of the new Complex. Nearly all of the English Learners at the Complex are Latino, with a few students of African or Asian background. The staff involved in the decision believed that the change to small schools would be extremely difficult for everyone involved, and that adding the task of meeting the needs of ELLs to teachers not accustomed to these students would not be in the best interest of the students. Because Latinos are the majority of the total Complex population, housing the English Learners at Summit did not amount to racial or ethnic segregation. The second year, the site principals agreed that English Language Learners could enroll at the small school of their choice, space permitting, but that Summit would continue to provide instruction for ESL 1-4. Students at other schools needing these courses would come to Summit for ESL, then return to their small schools for content instruction. Any student testing into the ESL 5/6 level based on the CELDT test would remain at his/her small school for English Language development and content classes. Except for foreign language courses, such as Spanish or French, all courses in the Complex are taught in English.

The Complex campus is located near the downtown district of a large city. The site is large and open, and is a mix of old and new buildings. Summit is located in the newest building. The science and computer labs are well-equipped, and there are at least two Internet-connected computers in every classroom. Students normally take public transportation to and from school, and many of their parents are employed in the construction and service sectors. Though exact figures are not available, many students at the Complex, and throughout the county, do not have legal immigration status.

During the 2005-2006, Summit enrolled approximately 460 students. Of the total student body, 94% were Hispanic, and 75% were English Learners. Most ELLs at Summit were classified from Beginning to Intermediate levels of English proficiency ("School Reports", 2006). There were 23 full time teachers, 2 counselors, 2 administrators, and 2 clerical staff employed by the school. All certificated staff at Summit, including the principal, were required to apply specifically to Summit when the comprehensive high school was

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subdivided, indicating their choice to work with English Learners. At the time research was conducted for this study, there were 15 Hispanic teachers at Summit and eight Anglo-American teachers. All Hispanic teachers speak Spanish, and four of the White teachers are also fluent in Spanish. The principal of the school identified himself as Mexican-American, and his first language is Spanish. One counselor self-identified as Spanish-speaking Hispanic, and the other counselor as an English-only Anglo.

The theme highlighted at Summit is the field of Communications. This theme was selected because staff believed emphasizing the many opportunities available in the communications industries would be relevant, and interesting, to students learning another language. Summit's elective offerings included Web Design, Marketing, Art, Translation Services, and Multimedia Production. Content and elective courses served students of varying English-proficiency levels within the same class. All courses except Spanish were taught in English. Students were separated based on language proficiency for ESL instruction only.

The master schedule for Summit followed an A/B plan, a modification of the block scheduling that is often employed at other small schools. Students had 4 classes each day, with different classes on "A" days than on "B" days, for a total of 8 different classes. However, students in ESL 1-6 and some students in English 1-4 took English every day. Students were placed in ESL/English classes based on CELDT or STAR testing results. Students in 9th grade Algebra Explorations classes also met every day. On Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, class periods were 90 minutes. On Tuesday, each class was reduced to 60 minutes, and students attended Advisory class for 60 minutes. On Friday, classes were 80 minutes, and Advisory was 30 minutes.

Summit has also adopted Advisory classes, another feature widely used at other small schools. Advisory classes are organized by grade level, and there is one Advisory taught in Spanish for beginning English Learners of all grade levels. Senior-level Advisory focuses on college and scholarship/financial aid issues. Before classes began in Sept 2005, the entire Summit staff attended a 3-hour workshop on designing effective Advisories. The original plan developed by the staff for Advisory was to use Tuesday sessions for whole class activities based on high school and college-prep related issues, such as time management, peer pressure, and graduation requirements. The Friday sessions were to be used for

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individual conferences with students. An Advisory committee created lesson plans for all grade levels for the first six weeks of school. Individual teachers were then supposed to design lessons based on the needs of their students.

On Tuesday afternoons, students are dismissed at 1:45 pm. All teachers at the Complex are required to attend their own small school staff meeting/professional development sessions until 3:10 pm. This regular, required time to meet and plan is in marked contrast to the time available at other small schools (Neufeld et al., 2004). At Summit, the agenda for these meetings was set by the principal, though individual teachers could request certain items be included for discussion. The principal also ran the meetings, with input from the counselors, security, or office staff as appropriate. A few teachers participated often in the discussions, and some never made a comment or asked a question. Time was normally spent in whole-group discussion, with occasional department or grade level meetings.

Most teachers teach at least two different courses each day, a common occurrence at many small schools. The average class size at Summit during the study was approximately 33 students, not including Physical Education. English classes tended to be smaller than content classes, which sometimes had as many as 37 or 38 students enrolled. An interesting paradox at some small schools, including Summit, is that some classes are larger than what was normal in the comprehensive school. Fewer teachers means that fewer sections of any one course are taught each day, forcing the existing sections to accommodate more students. Essentially, it's easier to balance class sizes with more sections of the same course, and impossible when multiple sections are not available. One teacher at the school had "looped up" with her ESL students as they moved up a level. In addition to this purposeful looping, the small number of teachers created a situation in which some teachers had students for more than one year, or even for multiple class periods during the school day

During the study, nearly every senior at Summit participated in a community-based internship. Students spent approximately 50 hours at their self-selected internships, which included a law office, a preschool, a television station, and other local businesses. Approximately 60 10^{th} grade, and 30 11^{th} grade students also participated in interdisciplinary problem based learning scenarios, involving English, math, science, and history classes. Through these projects students studied a problem in the community, attended several field

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trips, and made presentations to community members. These real-world experiences are often a very visible element of small schools.

STUDENTS

In an ESL class, language development is the focus, so the teacher and students are sensitive to difficulties due to language issues. Additionally, most students in ESL classes are at about the same level of English proficiency. In a content class, however, such as mathematics or history, the emphasis is on the information of the class, not the language spoken by the teacher and students. Students in the same content class may have widely varied levels of English proficiency, and academic difficulties might be caused by problems understanding English. Because I wanted to understand how personalization could affect students' learning in content area classes, I limited my search for student participants to content-area classes being taught during the first class period each day, when I was available to conduct observations.

After securing teacher consent to participate in the study, I solicited student participants through classroom announcements in two science classes, one government/economics class, and one math class. These were the content-area classes in session during first period each day, the time I had available to conduct the research. I had intended to also include a computer applications class, but my informal observations of the class prior to the study revealed that students worked independently from a computer manual, and there was very little whole-class or small group instruction. Delivering that level of personalized learning was simply not possible in all courses, and the course format did not lend itself to observation of teacher-student interaction.

All students in the four classes I identified as content-area classes appropriate for my study completed a form stating whether they were interested in participating. I randomly selected five students from the 37 that indicated willingness to participate. Two of the students initially selected were disqualified; one because she was not an English Learner and the other because she was currently enrolled in one of my classes. I randomly selected two additional students from the remaining forms, and began the study with five student participants, four boys and one girl, in grades 9-12. These variations in gender and grade level of student participants contributed to the diversity of perspectives reflected in the data

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(Creswell, 1998). Student profiles are presented below. One student, a 9th grade boy, moved out of the district about 5 weeks into the study, so observation and interview data for him were not included. All participants' parents allowed them to participate in the study, and all participant names have been changed.

Fondo

Fondo was a very high achieving senior from Mexico. He was well-liked by his peers and teachers, and was a member of the student government and MEChA clubs. He was accepted to several four-year universities, but decided to attend a local community college that had granted him a large scholarship. Fondo has been in the United States for four years, and began high school in first-year ESL classes. He progressed through the ESL levels rapidly and was enrolled in a mainstream English course by his junior year. His CELDT proficiency level was Early Advanced. He passed the CAHSEE as a junior, and graduated with a GPA above 3.5. His attendance was excellent, notwithstanding the occasional tardy or absence from first period. His earnings from a part-time job at a local restaurant were split between his own college fund and his contribution to his family. He was the first in his family to graduate from high school in the United States.

Clarissa

Clarissa was a 10th grader at Summit. She arrived in the United States 4 years ago from Mexico, and 2005-2006 was her first year in a mainstream English class. She often arrived at school early, spending the extra time in her science or English teacher's classroom. She also normally ate lunch in a classroom, working on the computer or chatting with friends. Her older brother also attended Summit until he dropped out to support his pregnant girlfriend and expensive car, and Clarissa has made it clear she wants a different life for herself. She was too shy to ask questions in a whole class setting, but was often at the teacher's desk asking for help or explanation during independent work. She was a very enthusiastic participant in this study, and would visit me to ask why I hadn't been observing her if I missed more than a few days in her classroom. Clarissa had not passed the CAHSEE at the time of the study. Her language proficiency was Intermediate, she attended all of her classes regularly, and her GPA was 3.0.

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Ricardo

Ricardo is also in 10th grade, and in his first year of mainstream English instruction. He is in the same Chemistry class as Clarissa. He is normally boisterous during class. He calls out answers, asks many questions, and gets out of his seat to work with friends who are on the other side of the room. He has been in the United States for 3 years. His teachers perceive him as bright, but immature because of his talkative behavior. His English proficiency level is Intermediate, and his GPA is 2.0. He passed the CAHSEE on his first attempt, and was truly surprised by the results. Though he is in the same level English class as Clarissa, he chose to conduct our interviews in English, while she preferred Spanish.

Jorge

Jorge was known among the students and staff at Summit as a gentle giant. He is tall and very strong, and took full advantage of his size as a star player on the Complex baseball team. He was quiet and shy, and rarely spoke without being spoken to first. Even on the baseball field he listened to the coach and followed his direction, but did not initiate a conversation. He is from northern Mexico, and has been in the United States just two years. Jorge was a junior at Summit and was enrolled in second year ESL classes. His teachers reported that he was a "great, nice kid," but that his English proficiency and academic skills were low. His CELDT level was Beginning. He attended school regularly, though his GPA is just above 2.0. He has not yet passed the CAHSEE.

TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATOR

Teacher participants were first-period teachers of student-participants who agreed to also take part in the study. There is only one administrator at the school, so I interviewed him, as well. The counselors at the school are not normally involved in instructional issues, which are the focus of this study, so the counselor was not included here.

Mr. X

Mr. X is a math teacher who has been with the school district for 14 years. He came to the United States from Mexico when he was in middle school, and often shared stories of his own school experiences. He joked with students, allowed them to sit at his desk to do their work, and even permitted them to search through the desk drawers for needed supplies.

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Mr. X enjoys woodworking and home improvement, and used his projects as examples of real-life applications of Algebra and Geometry. He was instrumental in planning student recognition ceremonies and helping with club events. Though his classroom did have a starkness about it, he posted some student work and vocabulary lists.

Mr. Matson

Mr. Matson is a physics and biology teacher at Summit, his first full-time teaching assignment. He is a former laboratory scientist. Students enjoyed his classes, in large part because he was extremely energetic and entertaining about his subjects and the school. He moved all around the room while teaching, demonstrated concepts with hands-on activities and labs, and even danced for the class if they completed their work. Painting his face for Complex pep rallies, dressing up for Halloween, and hula dancing for the staff were further examples of his enthusiasm. His classroom was stocked with laboratory equipment, and adorned with 3-D models hanging from the ceiling, student posters, and displays of content vocabulary words.

Ms. Wheeler

Ms. Wheeler is also a former laboratory scientist. She has been a teacher for four years, though 2005-2006 was her first year at Summit. She is small and soft-spoken, with a noticeable southern drawl. She had the difficult task of replacing a beloved Chemistry teacher, adored by staff and students alike, who left Summit for a position at another school. Ms. Wheeler was involved in a problem-based learning scenario with an English teacher at Summit and their students, and accompanied students on numerous field trips and off-campus presentations. She also participated in organizing student recognition and other events. Throughout the year, Ms. Wheeler struggled with classroom management issues, and often expressed the frustration that a few students were "ruining it for everyone else." Her classroom was also overflowing with scientific equipment. Her front whiteboard was nearly covered by a large chart listing each student's name and the work required for each grading period. When students turned in the work, she placed a check in the appropriate box, so that everyone in the class could see how everyone else was doing. She also normally had several student names on the "Detention" list.

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Ms. Rodriguez

A social science teacher, Ms. Rodriguez proudly claimed the position of most veteran teacher on the staff. She has been in the classroom for 32 years, a fact she shared with everyone she meets. Her bulletin boards were crowded with pictures of students. She was advisor to the MEChA club, and the site teachers' union representative. She frequently talked with her students about her own experiences as an English Learner and a migrant worker. She did not speak to students in Spanish or permit them to speak to her in Spanish. She did allow students to work together in Spanish, and occasionally clarified difficult words or phrases from the textbook. Her classroom was decorated with posters of important Chicano leaders, student work, plants, Mexican-style handicrafts, and a sofa covered in colorful pattern. She was a very strict disciplinarian. Many of her students spent a lot of time in the principal's office, and she did not tolerate tardies or late work. Because she was the only senior Economics and Government teacher, students had to pass her class to graduate, so they often went to great lengths to please her.

Mr. B

Though I did not observe any student-participants in Mr. B's history classes, he is included in the study to provide additional information and context about personalization and ELLs in the content areas. Mr. B is a former English Learner himself, and is a graduate of what was the comprehensive high school before the small school redesign. He has been a teacher with the district for eight years, and was at the comprehensive school before the redesign. He is very soft spoken, and rarely spoke in front of the staff at meetings. He did, however, express his many ideas and opinions related to English Learners, small schools, and the educational system in general during informal conversations. Students and teachers respect Mr. B for his content knowledge and sensitivity to his students who are still perfecting their English skills.

Ms. McGonagall

As her Harry Potter-derived name implies, Ms. McGonagall is an avid reader of all fantasy and science fiction. Students in her English classes looked forward to dramatizations, costumes, stage voices, and candle- lit stories. Her classroom was bursting with all types of

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literature, books on tape, and shiny potted plants. She has been employed by the school district for seven years, at Summit for two years. The entire staff of the Complex enjoyed the flower and vegetable garden she created and nurtured with her students in two formerly overgrown, weed-choked planters. She was normally very calm and non-confrontational, calling her class to order with a swipe at her wind chimes. At the weekly professional development sessions, she typically graded papers or wrote lesson plans, and rarely participated in discussions. She is included in the study to provide additional information and perspective about ELLs within the same class as students who are fluent in English. Both Clarissa and Fondo were enrolled in her class, though I did not observe them in her classroom.

Mr. Fleck

Mr. Fleck is the principal of Summit. He came to the United States from Mexico when he was in junior high school, and he reminds students and staff often that though he is an immigrant and an English Learner, he is an example of the success that hard work can bring. He was one of three vice principals at the comprehensive high school that existed before the redesigned Complex. Summit is his first principalship. He often shared with the staff the frustrations of compromising, negotiating, and even arguing with the other small school principals on Complex-wide issues. He spent most of the school day in meetings with parents or community groups, or at district-mandated in-services. His pride in student and teacher success was visible. The school office was decorated with pictures of students who had been accepted to college, won scholarships, achieved athletic success, or improved GPA or citizenship.

RESEARCHER

I am a full-time teacher at Summit. I have a professional relationship with all of the adults involved in this study. Three of the student participants were formerly in my classes, and I had interacted with the remaining student several times on issues related to graduation requirements, college eligibility, and financial aid.

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CONFIDENTIALITY

The identities of all participants, and of the school, have remained confidential. All interview and observational data have been kept confidential. Participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time.

DATA COLLECTION

I collected data from multiple sources from January 2005 to the end of June 2006. According to Yin (1993), case study data collection must draw from several sources that can illustrate the same set of issues. Data were gathered therefore from several sources, in order to provide rich detail and a clear understanding of the context in which the student experiences the classroom.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS

During classroom observations, I recorded critical incidents, which I then analyzed to help illustrate the extent to which students receive personalized instruction. Critical incidents can be surprising, sensational events, or everyday incidents that illustrate key aspects of a situation or institution (Angelides, 2001; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989; Redmann, Lambrecht, & Stitt-Gohdes, 2000). In my observations, critical incidents were usually instances in which the teacher interacted with the student participant, or in which the student participant interacted with another student. Critical incident or event analysis is a widely used method in qualitative case study design, and has been shown to be a "method of efficiently getting at the deeper levels of the social processes within the context of schools" (Angelides, 2001, p. 440). Focusing on certain incidents allowed me to structure the observations and interviews in order to capture events, comments, or other data that illustrate the complex issue of personalization. However, during several observations, student participants did not interact with the teacher, or engage in any remarkable interactions with peers, so I was not able to record a critical incident during every observation.

INTERVIEWS

Individual student participants stated they did not want to be interviewed as a group, as I had planned so all interviews were individual. It's possible students did not feel comfortable discussing personal experiences in the presence of other students. Student

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interviews took place in my classroom at lunch or after school. Teacher interviews were conducted in the teacher's classroom after school. It was often difficult to track down both teacher and student participants for interviews at regular intervals. Meetings, lunchtime Complex-wide events, field trips, testing, and absences all made a regular interview and observation schedule impossible. As end-of-the-year activities and demands increased, teachers let me know they would not have time for more interviews. See Table 1 Observation and Interview Frequency, below.

Table 1. Observation and Interview Frequency

	Observations	**Interviews**
Fondo	8	2
Jorge	9	2
Ricardo	6	2
Clarissa	9	3
Mr. X	1 (then student-participant in this class changed schools)	3
Ms. Wheeler	15 (both Clarissa and Fondo were in this class)	2
Mr. Matson	9	3
Ms. Rodriguez	8	2

To the extent possible, student and teacher interviews focused on the critical incidents relating to personalization that occurred during classroom observation. Discussing and reflecting on these incidents is a critical element of their use in data analysis. "Once the critical incident is noted, the researcher immediately proceeds with its analysis by interviewing the teacher and the child or children involved" (Angelides, 2001, p. 435). However, since in many instances I did not observe any particularly critical or interesting

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incidents between students and teacher participants, I spoke to teachers and students about other issues related to personalization, English Learners, and small schools. Jorge and Clarissa preferred to conduct the interviews in Spanish, while Fondo, Ricardo, and the teacher-participants spoke in English. I audio taped the interview and took notes. Interviews in English were professionally transcribed. I transcribed and translated the interviews in Spanish. I speak Spanish fluently, and am credentialed to teach Spanish at the secondary school level.

I interviewed the administrator once. Administrator perspective on the differentiated instruction and personal connections between staff and students helped to provide a "big-picture" view that individual teachers could not.

(See Appendix B for Interview and Observation Protocols.)

OBSERVATIONS

I observed each student in the content class selected approximately once every two weeks for 15 weeks. During each 50 minute observation, I completed the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, or SIOP (J. Echevarria & Short, 2004). (See Appendix B) This instrument, which has been widely used and found to be both reliable and valid (Guarino et al., 2001), measures the extent to which a student's language needs are considered within a content class.

I also recorded narrative field notes, and completed the Observation Reflection after the first few observations. As I honed my observation skills, these Reflections came to be redundant, and I felt they were not adding anything to the information in the field notes. These field notes and reflections will enable me to record critical incidents and other information not captured by the SIOP.

RECORD REVIEW

I examined students' academic and conduct grades and attendance over the course of the semester. These sources provided additional information about student engagement and involvement in school, which could be influenced by the level of personalization the student received. I also reviewed agendas from Summit's weekly professional development sessions.

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DATA ANALYSIS

Data were coded, analyzed, and interpreted in ways commonly employed with case study research. First, I read and re-read observation field notes, SIOP forms, and interview transcriptions in order to get thorough understanding of the experiences of the students and teachers involved in the study. Then, I employed cross-case categorical aggregation, in which I categorized the data and analyzed for issue-specific themes. I also attempted to capture and illustrate patterns among the data, to reveal any correspondence between and among categories. A thick description of the context, experiences, and events has also been included to provide as complete a picture as possible about the experience of personalization. Finally, I was also able to determine naturalistic generalizations from the data, and created statements that might be applied to other educational settings (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995).

LIMITATIONS

Though I did not study students in my own classes, including students whom I know personally may have affected their interview responses. They may have chosen to divulge more than they would with another researcher because they already trusted me, or they may not have revealed as much because the anonymity factor was lost. My professional relationship with all of the teachers and the administrator at the school could have impacted their behavior during observations and interview responses. They may have felt too vulnerable to reveal their real opinions during interviews, or have conducted their classes differently when I was present. On the other hand, they may have been more relaxed and open with me, considering that I was a colleague without supervisory or evaluative authority. I also have a firm belief in the power of personalization to meet the needs of English Learners, so I took extra measures to ensure triangulation of data to address my bias.

Other factors that may have affected the study are the length of time of data collection, and the limitation of study participants to one school at the Complex site. A longer period of data collection, such as an entire school year, might have provided a more detailed picture of the ways in which students experience personalization at school. Also, students at other schools may have different opinions and experiences, and a comparison of their views could have provided additional data.

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Finally, many of the teachers and office staff at the school speak Spanish and English fluently. Because staff members have had the experience of learning a new language, it's possible they are more aware of, or sensitive to, the language needs of their students than a mono-lingual teacher would be. Or, teachers who speak languages other than Spanish might have a different perception of students' language needs. Students and teachers with similar language experiences could contribute to the respectful and caring environment critical for the success of ELLs.

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CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which ELLs experience personalization at a small, conversion high school, and whether personalization can meet their psychosocial, language acquisition, and content-area needs. The research questions guiding the study are:

1. How is *personalization* of the educational experience for English Language Learners defined and operationalized by a small conversion high school?
2. What structural or operational features of the school contribute to, or hinder, the development of personalization?
3. What is the nature of the relationship between personalization and meeting the academic and psychosocial needs of English Language Learners?

The questions provided a guide and frame for exploring the experiences of English Learners with personalization, though data collection and analysis were not limited exclusively to the issues addressed in the questions. As I analyzed the observation and interview data, several themes emerged. This chapter is an explanation of those themes. Each theme is presented, followed by supporting evidence and explanation.

DEFINITIONS OF PERSONALIZATION

Interview data revealed that for Summit teachers and the principal, *personalization* is about creating a bond between teachers and students. For some teachers that connection is a personal one, and for others it's focused more on academics. The common element in both areas, though, is the emphasis on the student as an individual, not just one of many faces in a class period.

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

All teacher-participants agree that *personalization* means going beyond the traditional, cordial teacher-student relationship to get to know students individually. Mr. Matson was clear about this emphasis on individual students in stating that *personalization* is

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"... getting to know what the kids like personally... being able to create a particular rapport with individual students." Ms. McGonagall amplifies the definition somewhat:

> You have to know your students, not just what they do academically but also personally. You have to be able to know who they are when you see them in between classes, have that transparency between teachers and students. The old 'I know that you know that I know' kind of thing.

Mr. X says it very simply in stating:

> It is where you have something, more than just a student's body in the classroom. It's where, it's (sic) more of a friend, like a son who you must educate. Show him the ways, the correct ways of society, to prevent problems in the future, to combine the strong with the weakest of the students.

Mr. Fleck, the Summit principal, agrees with the teachers' understanding of personalization. He states, "You create that bond that gives you the ability to talk to them (students) in a different light. They don't just become one more student in the class." Clearly, teachers and the principal care about students, and understand the importance of treating students as individuals. At this point, though, the bond teachers and students share extends only through the school day and in the school building, as none of the adult or student participants mentioned any contact with students outside of school. Teacher participants did not attend school extra curricular events, visit students at their jobs, or otherwise see students outside of the classroom.

ACADEMIC STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

For Mr. B, the enhanced relationships at school are also important academically. His view of *personalization* is "getting to know your students very well, be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses, in terms of other academics." Ms. Rodriguez concurs about the academic aspect of personalization. She states, "To me personalization means taking a student and meeting their needs in a level that is educational and emotional in classroom instruction." For Ms. Wheeler, *personalization* is more about the academic relationship. She says it is:

> not necessarily knowing all the intricate details of a child's life but their academics. You know, to me it's letting them know that you are concerned about their education and you will do what needs to be done for them to be at grade level. I try to know the kids but I try to keep it at a school level, an academic level.

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For teacher-participants at Summit, then, personalization varies from knowing students well personally to knowing their academic needs. The data suggest the staff are in agreement that students should be treated as people, not just names on the roster. Though all teacher-participants clearly support the development of close relationships among students and staff, they are not yet capitalizing fully on those relationships instructionally, which I will discuss in the following section.

PERSONALIZATION AND INSTRUCTION

Summit teachers report the enhanced relationships with students, both personal and academic, impact instruction in two main areas: allowing students and teachers to communicate better, and providing teachers the opportunity to modify assignments for students.

BETTER COMMUNICATION

Summit teachers believe that their personal connections with students are useful in the classroom in allowing students and teachers to communicate better. Mr. Matson states:

> I have noticed that when there is a personal connection mentally the student is more interested in listening to what you have to say because they know that whatever they have to say the teacher is hearing. I think if it is a student that I know more I think they are a little more open to asking me more questions when they really have concerns and because of that I am able to explain to them more clearly what they are looking for. I think when you personalize it people can flow better.

Mr. X agrees on the importance of trust, built upon good rapport, in the classroom: "Because they get more confident. They get more open. They trust me more." Students who trust their teachers could be more likely to reveal their academic and social difficulties and ask for help, which could only contribute to students' academic success. Summit teachers value, and try to create, a safe, comfortable classroom environment in which students can communicate well with their teachers.

Ms. Rodriguez also believes that close relationships among teachers and students are important. "I think it works to your benefit. You kind of think that if one student is feeling good that way you can try and make the rest of your students feel good, too." Ms. McGonagall concurs, "There's just this understanding that makes things in the classroom go that much better." Undoubtedly, when students and teacher can communicate well, and feel

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comfortable with each other, the classroom experience is more pleasant for everyone. Mr. X is very honest on this point. "It makes my life easier. I enjoy (teaching) more." This non-threatening, nurturing environment can only enhance the school experience of English Learners who often face discrimination outside of school. It may help them, and other students, attend school more often and stay in school longer.

MODIFYING INSTRUCTION

Teachers also report that they use their personal and academic knowledge to modify their instruction for their ELL students. However, differentiating actual assignments or instruction is still at a very basic level. Differentiation normally involves shortening or modifying the existing assignment. For example, Ms. Wheeler states:

Everybody as far as they know gets treated the same. Absolutely I do make concessions. If I know a child is in ESL 1 in my Chemistry class but is making an effort to write everything down in English and is trying, even if they are not answering the questions because they really have no idea, they are still to me learning something...I guess I kind of pulled each one aside and was like 'If you just do this it will get better, just be patient, don't get overwhelmed.

Mr. Matson also modifies existing assignments: "I think I design the same lesson for everyone then modify it as I go for the students I find need additional assistance." Modifications for Mr. Matson include shortening assignments, coaching some students more than others, and allowing creative responses where appropriate. Ms McGonagall states, "in the class everybody gets the same assignment...however, knowing where the kid is I expect different things from different students." Students, however, are not aware of these modifications, as all student-participants report that they get the same assignments as the other students in the class. Mr. X only modifies assignments for the special education students in his classes. He states, "All of my Geometry students are working on the same page. They are all graded the same. There is some special consideration for the Special Ed students." These modifications occur spontaneously, as students are working through the assignments and teachers realize students are having difficulty. There is no observation or interview evidence of planning for various levels of English proficiency or skill level, alternate assignments, or different materials for students with different needs.

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The data suggest that capitalizing on personal relationships to provide better instruction is still in the beginning stages at Summit, and often happens in the "heat of the moment." When I asked Ms. McGonagall if she teaches the students she knows well any differently than others, her answer was a simple "No." Ms. Wheeler is even more clear on this point. "I don't know if I really use it (what I know about the students). I don't work it in to the curriculum so to speak. That would be damned near impossible with 35 kids all wanting to do 35 different things." Teachers are grappling with managing the different needs of all of their students, and at this stage are not able to personalize instruction through differentiated lessons and assignments.

Teachers do, however, believe they have accomplished the first step toward personalization, caring about their students. Each teacher-participant, except Ms. Wheeler, reported that they had good rapport with their classes, and that this relationship was valuable to both teachers and students. Even Ms. Wheeler agreed that she had a good relationship with most students; it was the actions of just a few students in the class that created the need for her independent work structure. Though these relationships do not normally extend beyond the school building, they do provide the foundation upon which to build capacity for differentiating and personalizing instruction. They are an important step in the right direction.

The Summit principal agrees that personalization begins with the relationship between teacher and student, but that it goes farther than what teachers are currently doing. He believes that teachers should use the bonds they have with students to differentiate their instruction. "You are actually creating an individualized lesson plan for every single student in the class." He admits the school is still working toward that goal. "We have come a long way, but we still have a long way to go." According to the teacher participants, however, large class sizes clearly prohibit such an effort.

INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING PLANS

In an effort to help teachers get to know students and their academic strengths and weaknesses, Mr. Fleck, the principal, required all teachers to complete Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs) for all of their Advisory students. Advisory period is a structural feature implemented at Summit to facilitate personalization. The ILPs consisted of a series of forms and checklists related to academic and behavioral issues, which students and teachers

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were to review and update regularly. Forms were kept in a notebook, which was turned in to the principal at the end of the year. In completing these ILPs, teachers conferred with students about grades, attendance, and post-high school plans. Sometimes they also discussed personal or family issues, but since Advisory is not a content class, there was no modification or adjustment to assignments in other classes. All teacher participants, however, viewed the ILPs as just more paperwork. There was no formalized way to share the information teachers gathered through the ILPs with students' content-area teachers, counselors or the principal. Teachers reported they told students to see the counselors for class changes or attendance issues, but following up on all of the recommendations proved to be unwieldy. The data indicate that merely modifying the structure of the student's schedule did not contribute to a more personalized experience.

At this point, the data from Summit illustrate that from the teacher perspective *personalization* is more about getting along well with students in the classroom than about using what teachers know about students to teach them differently. Despite the fact that the large majority of Summit students are ELLs, teachers do not report considering students' varying English proficiency levels in their instructional design or assessments.

STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS

Students do not expect a customized, differentiated learning environment. While they appreciate the opportunity to connect personally with a teacher, what they say they need most in a teacher is a skillful instructor who will work with them until they understand the same material as the rest of the class.

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

When I asked students what they needed in a teacher, all four participants made it clear that a good teacher must be patient, explaining things until students understand. Jorge (in translation): "A teacher who makes us work, and who explains things, and that's it." Ricardo states, "They should explain things in a way we understand. The way they like talk to us when we have a problem. They know how to talk to us about that problem." He is very clear that the "problem" would be with class work, not personal matters. When asked if he would share personal matters with a teacher, he replied "No, I don't think I would." Clarissa believes that a "good teacher gives examples, explains things, and helps you." Both Clarissa

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and Ricardo are also very clear that the independent nature of the Chemistry class does not work well for them, because the teacher does not explain things enough. "*No explica*. She doesn't explain things," laments Clarissa.

RESPECT

In addition to effective instruction, students also express the need to feel safe and respected by their teachers. Ricardo also states, "I think we need the connection still so we can feel safe with a teacher". He feels important and respected when teachers, "pay attention to me." Fondo describes a time when he was alienated by a teacher who forgot his (Fondo's) name:

> (I felt) like really, I feel bad because they supposed (sic) to teach you and you try to be part of his class. I feel frustrated because you put effort to let that person know you better but it seems they didn't even care that you were in the classroom.

These comments indicate that in addition to effective instructors, students need and want teachers who treat them with respect.

FAIRNESS

All student participants report that they get the same assignments as their peers in the same class, and that they believe they are graded the same way as everyone else. They are sometimes permitted to redo work or tests that need improvement. None of the participants mentioned that they were dissatisfied with having to meet the same standards as the rest of the class, or that they thought they deserved special allowances because they were learning English. Students are aware they are still learning English, but they are not expecting the teachers or the school to make any exceptions for them.

But Clarissa and Fondo also believe that a good teacher will go beyond the classroom instruction. Fondo states, "What makes a good teacher is I think the participation with the students...They have to know more of the students. For example, by being a role model, encourage students to participate in community activities, and school activities." Clarissa believes that a good teacher, "helps you if you have a problem", such as a conflict with parents or peers. Students clearly appreciate this effort by teachers to make themselves available for support, though they do not state that they are expecting it.

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INSTRUCTION COMES FIRST

What is interesting about what the students expressed is that the instructional piece came before any mention of non-academic issues. These data suggest that what students most want in a teacher is a skillful instructor, who is also friendly. Students are not expecting differentiated assignments, counseling sessions with every teacher, or any other perceived special treatment. The interviews reveal that though they do not use the specific term, students' understanding of *personalization* is instruction that is clear to them as individuals. For students, then, personalization seems to be about instruction, not close personal relationships. The data suggest that there is a dissonance between what teachers think students need and want, and what students say they want and need.

Teachers indicate they try to connect with students on a personal level, and even modify assignments as they go, but students do not express a need for differentiated lessons or a personal confidante in the classroom. Students clearly want to learn the class material, and they want it explained to them until they understand. But for them, differentiated instruction means standing out and being different from the rest of the class, anathema to most teenagers. Or perhaps their prior schooling experiences have taught them to expect the same work as the other students in their classes, and not to call attention to themselves if they don't understand the task or the information. For teachers, though, differentiated instruction typically means the opportunity to enhance a student's learning. Summit teachers could use their open relationships with students to encourage them to ask for help and to be clear about their needs.

SCHOOL STRUCTURE AND PERSONALIZATION

The structural and operational features of the school are both an advantage and a disadvantage in developing a personalized environment. The features of Summit that emerged from the interview and observation data as affecting the development of personalization were class size, the A/B schedule, teachers' non-classroom duties, the physical plant organization of Summit, and the small number of staff and students. Interestingly, Advisory is not viewed as a structure that impacts personalization, though it is heavily promoted by reformers and administrators as a key feature in creating a personalized environment.

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CLASS SIZE

Teachers and students alike reported that large class sizes impede the development of personalization. Large classes make it difficult to get to know each student and meet his or her needs. Mr. B states:

> It is so difficult to reach each and every kid. It has to do with class size. It is easier to monitor the kids in Advisory because we only have like 25 kids. When you have a class of 35 it is very difficult to reach every single one.

When I asked Mr. X why there were some students in his classes he felt he didn't know at all, he retorted, "Oh come on. I have 36 students (in each class)." Ms. Wheeler's feeling about class size reveals an interesting aspect of small schools. "The problem with personalization in this school is that the classes are too big...there are still 36 kids in each one of my Chemistry classes...It's a small school but it really isn't." Large class sizes clearly impede the development of personalization by making it difficult, if not impossible, to know all students well. Jorge concurs about the importance of smaller classes. "I learn more. The fewer the students, the better." Though Summit is small, the large class sizes inhibit the creation of close relationships.

A/B SCHEDULE

The A/B schedule was both a benefit and a drawback to personalization, depending on the frequency with which the class meets. Mr. Matson and Ms. Wheeler, whose science classes meet only on A or B days, felt that seeing students only every other day was not positive for two main reasons. First, students did not feel ownership of the class or classroom, since they were not present every day. Mr. Matson:

> I think having the A/B schedule definitely doesn't help me for the personalization. I think because you see the students less often. You have less time to communicate with them. Also, some students don't take ownership in this class if they don't feel like it is their class. I have been told 'because I'm not in this class very often.'

Also, teachers with A/B classes see twice as many students as those teachers with classes that meet every day; potentially, a teacher could have nearly 200 students. This increased student load strains the teacher's capacity to get to know all of his/her students.

Teachers who see their students every day definitely feel the schedule contributes to the development of personalization. They see fewer students more often, and this extra time together provides benefits for both teacher and students. Ms. McGonagall states, "I think it

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does a really good job of personalization. I see a smaller percentage of kids. I know my kids, my kids' friends, who they hang out with, who they study with, things like that." However, she was clear that she does not use this information to make instructional decisions. Students report that the A/B schedule makes the school week more interesting, since they have a variety of classes, but they also believe having so many classes makes it harder to focus. The principal stated the A/B schedule was of benefit for the academic needs of the students, since language learners cannot negotiate the accelerated content and language demands of a schedule in which they finish a year-long English class in one semester. But, ELL students seem to be shortchanged in their opportunity to learn content information. They are in large classes only every other day, which may not provide them with enough time to learn the information and skills necessary for their success. The school structure is working against them in the very classes in which they need the most support.

NON-CLASSROOM DUTIES

The extra, non-classroom duties at a small school also take a lot of teachers' time, which can detract from the time and energy available directly for students. The reduced support staff often means that teachers are responsible for planning events, doing administrative-type paperwork, fixing the photocopier, and other tasks that were not part of a teacher's job at the comprehensive high school. Ms. McGonagall explains:

> We have little committees we have to be part of. That work is in addition to grading and everything else. We also have to be in charge of other things, like senior exhibitions, anything like that. It is one more layer on the cake and it's a little overwhelming.

Mr. Matson agrees, "Yes, you know there just seems to be a lot more work being in the small school. Again, I'm not complaining necessarily I am just giving my own observation." Summit teachers are clearly concerned about the extra responsibilities of working in the small school, which can detract from the time available for students.

PHYSICAL PLANT ORGANIZATION

Despite the many challenges to creating a personalized learning environment, teachers reported that organization of the physical plant of the Complex was a benefit in terms of personalization. The grouping of most Summit teachers into one building, with one set of restrooms, allows students and teachers to see each other frequently throughout the

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day. This increased contact provides the opportunity to see each other in a different light, adding further dimension to the teacher-student relationship. Students also definitely felt the building was theirs. When a vandal broke into the Complex one weekend and spread graffiti over the Summit building, students were universally outraged. After the Complex graduation ceremony, Summit students, families, and teachers gathered outside the office for photographs and hugs. Students feel comfortable and safe in their space, which might be especially important to immigrants or other students who often feel they don't fit in other places, and can only enhance the instructional potential of Summit.

ENROLLMENT AND STAFF NUMBERS

The small number of teachers at Summit, as compared to that of a large, comprehensive high school, also contributes to the capacity of the staff to build relationships with their students, and with each other. Ms. Rodriguez:

I definitely think it (the structure of the small school) contributes to personalization. If I want to get a hold of a student at any time I know where to reach him and my colleagues know also. I don't feel as if I'm intruding if I need to pull a kid out. It is the same way for my colleagues. We know pretty much that we are working with a kid all together.

Mr. Matson agrees that the small number of staff members contributed to personalization. "The students get to know really well a limited number of teachers. The teachers also get to know really well a limited number of teachers." Clearly, teachers appreciate the opportunity to know students, and each other, well.

The technical features of the school structure, then, seem to contribute to personalization in some classes while detracting from it in others. In cases where students need the most attention, such as in a difficult subject area, they get the least support. Summit did not intentionally design a schedule to shortchange ELLs, of course, but the reliance on English classes to provide all of the language instruction necessary resulted in a system that does not provide enough opportunity to learn the information and academic language in the various content areas. Though Summit emulated the structural features of many small schools, the same care was not exercised in following best practices for language and academic development.

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MEETING THE NEEDS OF ELLS

The next section will present the data gathered during observation and interviews about instructional strategies and student experiences. The data suggest that at this point, the instructional needs of Summit's ELLs are not being addressed in the content classroom. First, using observational data, I provide a snapshot of a class period with each teacher of a student-participant, then give a closer examination of the teachers' use of SIOP and other strategies that make content accessible to ELLs. Finally, I present the efforts of Summit to meet the non-academic needs of students.

TEACHER SNAPSHOTS

Mr. Matson's attempts to use SIOP strategies and other methods appropriate for teaching biology content to ELLs were obvious. Directions and tasks were always written and repeated several times, he provided many examples and visuals, he allowed ample wait time for student responses to questions, students engaged in many hands-on activities, and he allowed them to work together in Spanish if necessary. He did, however, speak more frequently to students with more advanced English proficiency, almost avoiding students at the lower levels of proficiency.

In Mr. X's Algebra class, nearly all of the students speak to each other, and to him, in Spanish. There are two non-Hispanic students who, in my observations did not speak at all during class. He responded to all students first in English, but did provide an explanation in Spanish if students did not understand the English version. Mr. X mentioned and wrote content relevant vocabulary on the overhead projector, and there were a few student-created posters using the words in the classroom. His lectures were based on examples and illustration of the steps necessary to solve the problems in the Algebra book. He made extensive use of the overhead projector. He did not address the text features or language structures of the textbook, and students did not look to the book for explanation on solving the problems. Students worked together to complete the assignments while Mr. X circulated around the room answering questions. Occasionally, students worked in groups to complete hands-on projects such as models, though most of the time was spent in seat work. Though he is a 14 year veteran of the school district, and has attended numerous workshops and conferences over the years, his classes were still mostly lecture and independent work. The

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ELLs in his classes were not provided with the critical opportunities for meaningful interaction, or the emphasis on the English language structures necessary to master the content.

Students also spent most of their time in Ms. Rodriguez's class in independent, or small group, seat work. They read the chapters in the Government book, then answered the questions at the end of the section or chapter. There was an occasional lecture, though no visual aids were provided. "Discussions" were also focused on the teacher, as students rarely volunteered answers or opinions. This emphasis on listening and speaking does not provide ELLs with the necessary visual and hands-on support necessary for them to understand the information or follow the lecture. Quite simply, language issues were almost never addressed in Ms. Rodriquez's class. She did not use SIOP strategies, or other means to make the content accessible to the ELLs in the class. She did not highlight and utilize vocabulary words, provide practice with using new language structures embedded in the content, or create many opportunities for active engagement. As a veteran teacher, Ms. Rodriguez was very familiar with her content, school rules and procedures, and with classroom management strategies, yet she did not utilize her comfort and knowledge to design quality instruction.

Students in Ms. Wheeler's class worked independently, or in small groups, at their tables for the entire class period. Due to many difficulties with student behavior early in the year, Ms. Wheeler did not provide any whole class instruction. There was a large chart posted in the front of the room listing students' names and all work they were required to complete, and Ms. Wheeler checked off the work for each student as it was turned in. She remained at her desk in the front of the room for the class period, calling students up to review and check off their work. Some students endeavored to complete their work, though many were off-task listening to music, applying makeup, or chatting about movies and friends. Ms. Wheeler's class did not take into account language issues, differentiated instruction, personalization, or student engagement. She did not use SIOP strategies, or otherwise endeavor to provide the ELLs with comprehensible content information. She did not begin the school year using this independent method, but moved to it when she felt she had too many discipline problems in her classroom. Though the class is more subdued, students are essentially on their own to learn the challenging chemistry content.

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AWARENESS OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

The needs of ELLs are not being addressed systematically at Summit. All teachers at Summit are credentialed in their content-areas, and have met the minimum requirements for California to teach English Learners in content-area courses. All teachers are aware that they have ELLs in the same classes as students who speak only English, or those who have been redesignated from *English Learner* to *Fluent English Proficient.* All teachers demonstrate a positive, accepting attitude toward English Learners, and all express a desire to make their content accessible to ELLs. However, none of the teacher participants indicated their awareness of the English proficiency levels of individual students, though the information is readily available in the students' computer files. Though no one test can provide a complete picture of a student's skills and knowledge, the CELDT does give useful information about a student's skills. When I asked teachers why they had not looked at the language proficiency levels of their students, all responded that they just had not taken the time to do it. If teachers are not aware of students' language proficiency levels and needs, designing effective instruction to meet those needs is difficult.

SIOP STRATEGIES

Staff received 3 professional development sessions of 90 minutes each on SIOP strategies, as well as several small group or individual follow-up meetings. Numerous teachers were formally evaluated on their use of one or more SIOP strategies, which could be factor motivating the teachers to use the strategies. Further, the school district's main strategy for improving the success of ELLs was emphasizing SIOP training and support for all teachers. Though the training provided to the Summit staff on SIOP was far from complete, the concepts were not entirely new, since all teachers have had some training in meeting the needs of English learners in their credential preparation. Observational data indicate that the teachers-participants do not consistently use SIOP strategies despite the training provided at Summit and their credential preparation.

According to the SIOP observation checklist, the most commonly used instructional technique for meeting the needs of ELLs was allowing students to clarify concepts in L1, followed by group work, frequent interaction among students, and use of speech appropriate for students' proficiency level. See Table 2, below. Many of the other elements of the

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protocol, such as the use of language objectives or connections of information to students' backgrounds and experiences, were not addressed during observations.

Table 2. Frequency of Use of SIOP Strategies

SIOP Strategy	Number of Times Observed
Clarify Concepts in L1	20
Group Work	12
Interactions among students and teacher	11
Appropriate speech for students' proficiency	7

Clarifying in L1

Students were permitted to clarify information and concepts in their native languages (for Summit, that means nearly always Spanish) both with peers and sometimes with the teacher, but it seems to be more than clarification in many cases. It was a translation of what the teacher, or the book, said, into Spanish. Students were often not required to make new vocabulary or language structures "their own." That is, students were not obligated to use the new information in original writing or speaking. In my observations, many students copied information directly from the book or from their peers, but could not explain the concepts or information in their own words. For example, Jorge speaks nearly all Spanish in his Biology class. He interacts very infrequently with the teacher, spending most of his time talking with his table partner or copying from his paper. Clearly, Jorge relies on Spanish to get through the class, and he is rarely required to use English. Students seemed to have learned that if they resist using English long enough, they will be permitted to use Spanish. Essentially, as long as a Spanish-speaking peer is nearby, students don't really need to use English to learn the content information.

The instructional strategies being employed by the teachers in this study are not helping students to learn English. Some educators might argue that it is not the job of the content-area to teach English, any more than it is the responsibility of the English teacher to provide content information. However, each teacher must be responsible for the language necessary to learn and apply his/her content knowledge and skills. ELLs need explicit

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instruction in this type of academic language, and it is the responsibility of each teacher to provide support so that ELLs can acquire the language and subject area skills necessary. The inclusion of the language objectives element in the SIOP protocol speaks to this importance of considering language in content-area instruction.

Group Work

I also observed much group work, since all students interact more with each other than with the teacher. But, the group work that I observed was usually allowing students to talk and work together while they all completed the same sections of the assignment. Traditional cooperative grouping, in which each group member completes certain tasks or has a specific role, was not observed. Also, groups were most often made up of table mates and others in close proximity, not the varying skill levels called for in SIOP or cooperative grouping. In my observations, groups were not changed for different activities or assignments.

This emphasis on group or partner work appeared to put the more capable student in the role of teacher much of the time. This raises several questions about the roles of the teacher and student in the classroom. For example, can the teacher be sure the students are teaching each other the correct information and skills? How do the students feel about their roles? Shouldn't the more advanced students be provided with more opportunities to learn? Perhaps the most important question is why the student with less English is not understanding the information the way it is presented. It's almost as if teachers are relying on the more advanced students to, essentially, do what they cannot do.

Interactions Among Students and Teachers

To ensure students have captured the concepts being taught, teachers reported they asked students verbally if they have understood the information, but here again, the data reflect a different experience for students. To check for understanding, Ms. Rodriguez stated that she would "go over and ask questions. If I give them a question I have them model, repeat it for me, and then tell me the answer in their own words just to make sure that they understood." In my eight observations in her class, Ms. Rodriguez asked only one student to repeat directions for the task. When students didn't understand something in her class, they turned to each other. On four occasions I observed Fondo, and other students in her classes,

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completing end of chapter questions or activities. Though many students had copied the answers directly from the text, they could not explain the answer to me in their own words, either in English or in Spanish.

Clearly, even with peer assistance, many students still did not understand the information. Fondo almost always worked on assignments with the same two or three students, who were all strong academically and in English proficiency, though they normally worked together in Spanish. According to Ms. Rodriguez, he was more independent than other students in the class, and so didn't need as much help as some others might have needed. However, his experiences in the classroom suggest otherwise. If Fondo, a confident, outgoing student was struggling, one can only imagine what a less capable student was experiencing.

Mr. X reported that he asks students if they understand, and will re-teach if they don't. But he chooses to focus on the more motivated students, ignoring the very students who might need the most help. He stated, "I try to concentrate on those students who are working and who are more into the teaching, and those students who really want to learn and understand. The ones that are making a lot of noise—that's all, I'll leave." Students who have understood the information and the task are busy completing it. Those who are making noise might not understand what to do, and are most in need of Mr. X's assistance.

Ms. Wheeler also reported that she asks students directly if they understand. However, in the class I observed, students were the ones who approached her when they did not understand. For example, Clarissa spent most of her time working with two other Latinas who are also English Learners. They conversed in Spanish about the work, and Clarissa was normally the one who sought help from the teacher when needed. Of the eight days I observed Clarissa, she interacted with the teacher four times; three times during one observation, and once during a separate observation. She initiated all of the contacts. Mrs. Wheeler was very patient in explaining and giving examples, but she did not initiate the check for understanding.

ELLs who are not comfortable with their oral English skills may not approach the teacher as often as other students, thereby missing the opportunity for enhanced instruction. As Jorge admits, (in translation) "The teacher doesn't know that I don't understand a lot. It's embarrassing not to know English, so I don't tell him." These students have learned to rely

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on their peers, but observation and interview data do not suggest teacher participants are actively checking to ensure this peer work is leading to understanding. In some classes, it's possible that a student is incorrectly teaching skills and information to her peers.

Other SIOP Strategies

In semi-structured interviews, teachers report they often use vocabulary strategies, modeling, real world examples, and hand-on projects or manipulatives to help ELL students understand instructions and content information. However, classroom observational data does not bear this out. For example, while each teacher had a pocket chart with unit-specific vocabulary in the classroom, I only observed Mr. Matson removing the words from the chart, emphasizing them in conversation, or otherwise referring to them. However, even in his classes, students were not interacting with the words. He was, essentially, reinforcing his own use of the words, but students were not being given the opportunity to practice and learn them. Other aspects of the SIOP protocol, such as language objectives, questioning techniques, and connecting to background knowledge were not observed.

One Close-Up

Jorge's experiences in Mr. Matson's class are particularly illustrative of the plight of the ELL in the content classroom. Mr. Matson states, "I continually go to the people who I am pretty sure need a little bit more help. I have a tendency not to avoid but to go less frequently to others who I think are doing the work quite well." He identifies people who need more help by quality of their written work. Regarding Jorge specifically, Mr. Matson states:

I go up to him and I have him explain to me verbally one or two sentences...in his best way I try to find if he is able to express some vocabulary...I do catch myself more frequently going to Jorge or several other students just to assess if they know what is going on.

However, Jorge's experience of the class is very different. In my nine observations, Mr. Matson spoke directly to Jorge only two times. In fact, observation data indicate that Mr. Matson rarely even walked past Jorge's side of the lab table. If he did approach the lab table, he normally spoke to Jorge's seatmate, then walked away without approaching Jorge. Mr. Matson is an enthusiastic teacher who cares about his students, and I do not suggest he is

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intentionally providing false information. But the data illustrate that though he may be concerned about Jorge, he does not provide Jorge with individual support in learning the biology content.

OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Internships, other field experiences, and real-world projects are frequently mentioned in the research literature as means to provide English learners with authentic areas in which to develop their language and content skills. At Summit, only seniors, who make up about 10% of the student body, participated in internships. Approximately 60 students in 10th grade and 30 in 11th grade took part in Problem-Based Learning scenarios involving authentic real-life problems and issues. Clarissa and Ricardo participated in this project, and Fondo completed an off-campus internship at a preschool. While a few other teachers did take their students on field trips, there was no concerted effort to provide real-world, field experiences for all students. Interestingly, Fondo, Clarissa, nor Ricardo mentioned the internship, field trips, or other non-classroom activities in any interview or informal conversation. Perhaps they just forgot to talk about the projects at the time of the interviews, or the experiences were not as important to students as they were to the teachers involved. Though authentic tasks and experience are a well-established means of developing academic skills and language proficiency, Summit does not provide these experiences to all students.

At the classroom level, then, data suggest that ELLs do not consistently receive instruction especially suited for their needs. Teachers do not consistently use SIOP methods, or other means to make the content accessible to their ELLs. There is no evidence that teachers are using their relationships with students to design better instruction for them, or to address students' unique psychosocial needs. The technical changes to the school structure, such as the block schedule and Advisory classes, have not altered the school culture to create a more personalized learning environment.

PROGRAMMATICALLY

The systematic whole school approach to meeting the needs of ELLs is also at the very basic level. New students are assessed on their English proficiency before being enrolled, and they are normally placed into an English or ESL class corresponding to their proficiency level. Continuing students are automatically moved up to the next English or

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ESL level regardless of the grade earned in the class unless a teacher suggests a different placement. However, placement of students in content classes is based on what class section is available when students have room in their schedules, without consideration of students' language proficiency level. For example, there are normally students with many different levels of English proficiency in the same content classes. No effort is made to ensure a balance of language proficiency levels, or group students of similar levels together in the same class period to facilitate instruction.

However, options are limited for students who fail content courses, or who are in need of extra help with their English skills. Though Summit does offer courses in the late afternoon so that students can make up missed or failed credits, students must be in at least ESL 5/6 to take these classes. This rule eliminates the very students who need the extra opportunity. A student with a beginning level of English proficiency who is enrolled in ESL 1/2, for example, might be more likely to fail a science or history course than a more advanced student. However, the weaker student does not have the opportunity at school to take extra English courses, or to make up the subject matter credit s/he missed because of language barriers. Fondo, very strong student, utilized these extra courses to ensure he had enough of the necessary credits to be eligible to attend a university. A weaker student, or one at a lower level of English proficiency, is not provided the same access. Individual Summit teachers provide tutoring in their content-areas, but there is not an established schedule or meeting place. The Complex library and writing center offer research and writing assistance before and after school, but Summit students rarely attend. Perhaps they do not feel comfortable working with non-Summit staff or students, or they have other responsibilities after school.

MEETING PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS

While all Summit teachers attest to the importance of a good student-teacher rapport, efforts to capitalize on these relationships to address the unique difficulties of immigrant students at Summit are not specified in any interviews. Not one staff member mentioned awareness of the immigrant experience, such as supporting students who are living apart from their families, or who experience poverty or racism. It's possible teachers think they know their students better than they actually do know them. Mr. Matson, though, stated that

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if he knows a student is working at night because s/he is trying to help the family, he might give the student an extra day to complete an assignment. The principal did mention that many Summit students have a different family structure than what many U.S. Americans have, though he did not specify what that structure was, and did not acknowledge anything specifically related to immigration.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

All Summit teachers are required to attend the professional development sessions held each Tuesday afternoon. Agendas are provided at each professional development session, and minutes are taken and distributed to the entire staff. Agendas are prepared by the principal, though individual teachers often request items to be included. A review of the professional development agendas shows that Summit staff invested significantly more time discussing the school policies regarding restroom passes, tardies, and the copy machine than they invested in personalization strategies or meeting the needs of their ELL. While it is certainly possible staff discussed personalization efforts informally, its absence from meeting agendas indicates it was not as pressing as the other items that were listed on the agendas.

PERSONALIZATION STRATEGIES

Agendas from the weekly professional development sessions do not reflect a school focus, or even attention to, the development of personalization. Of 15 agendas I reviewed, there were 3 items relating to personalization strategies, all of which were concerned with operational issues related to the completion of the Individualized Learning Plans, such as due dates and storage of the files. Though staff members have an idea of what personalization *is*, they clearly need more time to develop their skills at *doing* personalization. Data suggest that while teachers are willing to differentiate or modify their instruction for students, they need more support in learning how to do this, such as additional professional development in using SIOP and other strategies for ELLs.

LANGUAGE AND ACADEMIC NEEDS

The data suggest that the newer Summit teachers, and even the more experienced, veteran teachers struggle with addressing the needs of the ELLs in their classrooms, yet the weekly professional development agendas do not reflect any ongoing, formalized effort to

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meet the language-acquisition and content needs of ELLs. Some of the English teachers at Summit occasionally attended workshops designed to better teach reading or writing to ELLs, but the content teachers were not provided with any outside support with respect to ELLs. Because instructional issues are not normally addressed at the professional development sessions, and staff is not provided outside opportunities to learn about making content accessible to ELLs, teachers are essentially left on their own to devise effective instructional methods.

PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS

Weekly professional development agendas do not reflect items related to meeting non-academic needs of ELLs. Personal or family counselors, social/medical services/employment services, or immigration or legal issues are not addressed. While teachers do make efforts to know their students well as people, there does not seem to be the same effort to openly discuss issues related to immigration, poverty, or family challenges, either with students or with the whole staff. The counselors at Summit spend nearly all of their time on scheduling and testing, and have little time to support students' psychosocial needs, so the role of the teacher is critical in this area. Yet, students and teachers are again left on their own.

SUMMARY

In summary, the data indicate that though Summit teachers and the principal agree on the importance of seeing students as individuals, at this point the school does not have an organized, systematic method to address the varied academic and psychosocial needs of these individuals. Support for language development within the content-areas is not evident in most classrooms, and teachers are not receiving the professional development necessary to handle these issues. The smallness of the school, and the good rapport between many teachers and students, is not contributing to a more effective educational experience for students.

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CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

As Summit was being created from the division of the large comprehensive high school, teachers and the principal spent hundreds of hours refining the school mission statement, quibbling over the student dress code and tardy policy, and planning Advisory activities. Sadly, it seems their time and efforts were misguided. Nearly three years into the reform effort, staff still frequently discuss student tardies, argue about the importance of compliance with the dress code, and grumble about Advisory. The mission statement is nowhere to be found. More troubling, though, is that classroom instruction has not been redesigned to meet the needs of the students for whom Summit was created, and there is no system in place to address their unique psychosocial needs. The conversion to a small school had tremendous potential to improve the learning of Summit's many ELLs, but the structural changes implemented have not been enough to change the culture of the Summit and realize the promise of a new kind of school.

The pledge of a new educational experience was built partly upon a new definition of the teacher-student relationship. The personalization of instruction that can grow from close relationships with students, one of the key tenets of the small school reform effort, is not widely implemented at Summit. While teachers and the principal agree that personalization begins with a good relationship with students, teachers clearly have varying comfort levels with creating these close relationships. While most teachers genuinely care about their students as individuals, some teachers simply do not want to get too close to students, and others do not feel equipped to handle the problems and issues students might share with them if the relationship were close. Little effort was made to reculture the school to nurture and capitalize on close relationships among teachers and students, though it is clear now that the culture of the school as it relates to relationships has an impact on the extent of personalization at the school.

The nature of the relationship between personalization and meeting the needs of ELLs is thus extremely complex and layered. At the simplest level, all students, but especially

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vulnerable students like immigrants, need to feel safe with their teachers. Interview and observational data, and the general "feel" of Summit indicate this trust exists between most students and their teachers. For some students, such as Ricardo, that level of personalization might be sufficient to support them in completing coursework. Others though, like Jorge, might need additional attention, and differentiation, to be able to achieve the necessary language and content standards. In essence, it's impossible to standardize what *personalization* looks like for every child and every teacher, so the relationship between personalization and meeting the needs of the learner is one that is highly dependent on the individuals involved. The critical element is the desire, as well as the capacity, of the teacher to meet the students' needs. Summit teachers report that they are "doing" personalization, though their efforts are still clearly at the most beginning levels.

What seems to be missing at Summit is a sense of urgency to provide students with the highest-quality education possible. In observations, interviews, staff meetings, or informal conversations, there is no mention or evidence, of what Nieto (2005) refers to as a sense of mission or a passion for social justice. Though teachers and students share a comfortable environment and good rapport, there is no evidence to suggest Summit is doing everything possible to successfully educate ELLs, or help them handle their unique needs as immigrants and language learners. Success on tests, in course grades, admission to college, or other overt measures of achievement seem to be viewed as something apart from, or beyond the reach of, students, teachers, and the school. This is another area in which the opportunity to realign the culture of the school to the new context was missed.

However, this lack of school-wide focus on improving instruction, through personalization, SIOP, or other means, or on addressing the needs of the immigrant population does not imply teachers are not willing to do what is necessary for their students to learn. In spite of their certifications, Summit teachers just don't seem to know what to do to provide better instruction, so they expend their time and energy on what they do know and can control. Unfortunately, Summit seems to have fallen victim to the "trivialities of structural change" (Hubbard et al., 2006, p. 251) instead of focusing attention and effort on what really matters for students. The same has been found at other small conversion schools. Making the organization structures different has taken precedence over improving instruction

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and the relationships among teachers and students, a common occurrence at conversion schools (Feldman & Lopez, 2004; Neufeld et al., 2005).

What is also missing from Summit is an exploration of the opportunities available by being small. There is little, if any, evidence of the ways in which Summit capitalizes on its smallness to better educate its students. The benefits and drawbacks of smallness are not discussed or explored, either formally or informally. It's almost as if Summit is just a regular high school with only 500 students, instead of a school that was intended to capitalize on its small size. The data strongly suggest that smallness does not ensure more personalization, more effective instruction, counseling, placement, extra academic support, or equity of access or achievement. Both research (Ancess, 2000; Elmore, 1992, 1995; Feldman & Lopez, 2004; Neufeld et al., 2005) and Summit's experience illustrates that smallness does not ensure that anything changes about instruction or the student experience at school. Perhaps the move to being small was so overwhelming that staff needed more time to digest the new system and its potential; or perhaps the staff does not have a clear vision of how a small school can and should be different from a regular high school.

There is also no evidence to suggest support for, or even acknowledgement of the continuing change process. Creating a personalized learning environment requires a thoughtful redesign of the institution, as well as a change in individual behavior, but the issue of change simply does not come up at Summit. It's as if the conversion from comprehensive school to small school was the endpoint of the reform, not the beginning of a new school experience. Meaningful changes in beliefs and behaviors, as well as in organizational structures, take time to develop within the school context (Richardson & Placier, 2001). Summit has not intentionally disregarded the change process, of course, but attention to the process seems to have been lost somehow.

Evidence of administrative leadership is also lacking. Mr. Fleck, the Summit principal, very clearly cares about students and is willing to put in the hard work to do what is best for them, but teachers do not mention him as providing either instructional or operational leadership. In fact, they do not mention the principal at all, which might indicate that he is not a strong presence at the school. Perhaps, however, the omission is simply an indicator of wariness around the researcher. Fullan (1997a) emphasizes the importance of the principal in stating, "Whole school reform...changes the culture of the school and the nature

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of the teaching profession. Principals are front and center in this transition" (p. 129). Leadership is certainly not reserved for just the principal, but Summit teachers don't mention other staff members as helping to lead the change. Leading a small school is different than leading a large school (Mohr, 2000), and it's likely that Mr. Fleck also needs support to develop his capacity and knowledge in the small school context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Summit staff has attempted a momentous change in school organization at the same time it has taken on the challenge of successfully educating ELLs. Their experiences can be of great benefit for other schools considering a similar redesign. There are many opportunities for Summit to capitalize on its small size to meet its goal of helping ELLs achieve academic success. Since securing the extra funding and space necessary for smaller classes is essentially beyond Summit's control, the school must work within the district allocations to improve the school program. Offering bilingual classes is also not possible. However, there are many possible opportunities to make a difference in the schooling of Summit's ELLs. The remainder of this chapter will discuss their opportunities for continued growth in the areas addressed by the research questions, and provide suggestions for other schools considering a similar path toward successfully educating an increasingly diverse student population. Opportunities for further study are also presented.

TEACHER QUALITIES

Certification

All Summit teachers meet California and NCLB credentialing requirements for their subject areas, and all have either CLAD or BCLAD certification. However, CLAD/BCLAD and NCLB compliance are not sufficient preparation for teachers to ensure that the needs of all students are being met. The data show that these certifications do not ensure the diverse instructional needs of Summit students are being addressed. The limited academic achievement of Summit's ELLs indicates that even highly educated, highly qualified teachers must continue to receive specific, focused professional development designed to help teachers address the needs of their students (Dong, 2004; Echevarria et al., 2006).

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Caring

Fundamental to any teacher's prowess in the classroom, but not measured by any test or academic accomplishment, is his or her capacity to care about students. A teacher who truly cares about the students in her classes, and who is not overwhelmed by the sheer number of people to care about, is probably more likely to make the effort necessary to ensure that all students learn. Summit could consider ways to promote this ethic of care among the staff. For example, the principal could provide training and information to help teachers recognize students in trouble, as well as contacts with community agencies that can provide assistance. Teachers who feel equipped to meet, or at least address, the many psychosocial needs unique to immigrant students may take more risks in getting involved with students. This sense of self-efficacy may alleviate the desperate feeling expressed by Ms. McGonagall: "I'm not trained to be a counselor." Reducing teachers' student loads would also allow an enhanced sense of caring to blossom, since caring for fewer students would definitely seem more achievable. Principals could also begin to look beyond university degrees and state certifications of potential new hires to possible indicators of the candidates' level of caring for students, such as community service projects, student club sponsorship, or other activities outside of the classroom.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Student Needs

Professional development must be ongoing, and focused on the needs of the students at the school. The data reveal that although Summit teachers are "highly qualified," are aware of the ELLS in their classes, and express a desire to serve these students effectively, they do not employ the instructional strategies necessary to do so. All Summit teachers chose to be assigned to Summit, so their difficulties in the classroom are not necessarily a matter of refusing to learn new techniques, or of resisting the change to small schools. It seems teachers simply don't know *what* to do or *how* to do it, and are not given the ongoing support to learn what they need to know. Teachers need opportunities to develop the skills that will help them make language and content accessible to the many ELLs at Summit. The connection between this type of teacher learning and student learning is well established (Ancess, 2000).

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Weekly professional development sessions are nearly always occupied with operational issues. Some information sharing and discussion of these issues is important, of course, but the data suggest that Summit is in need of more effective use of this time. Despite having an enrollment of more than 75% ELLs, very little time during the professional development sessions is spent on learning or developing the instructional techniques described in chapter 3 to support these students in the content classroom. Few opportunities for formal professional development are available for content-area teachers outside of school, mostly due to budget constraints. Personalization strategies, such as differentiation and handling personal issues, are also not addressed in any organized way at Summit. Professional development at Summit, therefore, must be ongoing, and be designed to meet the unique needs of the Summit students.

Teacher Needs

Professional development must also be designed to meet the needs of the Summit teachers, in that it is responsive to the emotional and intellectual work involved in teaching a rigorous curriculum to students who are learning English. Little, if any, time at Summit is devoted to difficult discussions about personal beliefs about education, pedagogy, and commitment to students and to the reform. The importance of the teacher culture at Summit has been overlooked.

Even with the commitment to improve instruction at Summit, teachers must have time and support for making sense of the change and for implementing it in their classrooms. "Teaching is hard intellectual work that involves tough thinking about educational changes, as their desirability and consequences, as well as thinking through what these changes mean or look like in classrooms" (Hargreaves et al., 2001, p. 123). Summit teachers need time and support to discuss their beliefs about education, and to learn about and implement new instructional methods to meet their changing student population. They must also be shown how the changes associated with smallness can have a positive impact on themselves personally. "Smallness, in other words, must benefit teachers if teachers are to use smallness to benefit students" (Neufeld et al., 2004, p. 11).

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COUNSELING PROGRAM

Summit could consider creating a counseling program that addresses the needs of the many immigrant and English Learners at the school. School presents many unique challenges for immigrant students and ELLs. At present, Summit's counselors do not systematically address issues specific to immigrants and English Learners. Summit could reorganize its counseling program to meet the specific needs of this population. Counselors' time and energy are currently nearly consumed with ongoing testing organization and management, and they have little time to support students' psychosocial issues. Since nearly all of the tests are also administered at the other small schools in the Complex, Summit could consider cooperating with another small school to hire a testing coordinator, releasing a teacher for part of the day, or otherwise removing the testing administration from the counselors.

Once freed from this ongoing responsibility, counselors could focus on helping students handle family and language/cultural issues, health care, graduation requirements, college preparation, and other issues associated with immigrant and English learner students. While the school certainly cannot take on the responsibility of guiding students and families through the immigration process, Summit counselors could provide referrals to community agencies who can. A culturally sensitive, well organized counseling program has been shown to help immigrant students be successful at school (Lucas et al., 1990; Romo, 1993; Runfola et al., 2003).

SCHOOL STRUCTURE

A school structure that supports the instructional goals of Summit, and that addresses the unique needs of immigrants and English Learners, is critical if Summit is to capitalize on its small size. The master schedule and other school structures should be organized to support the school objectives and needs of the students.

Master Schedule

One area which might enhance the potential for personalization in the content-areas is a change from the A/B class schedule. Though organizing the master schedule is always a challenge, Summit could consider modifying the schedule so that those students needing extra time in core classes could take those classes every day, instead of every other day. Teachers of classes meeting only on A or B days were clear in stating that this structure does

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not support them in meeting the needs of their students. In fact, the A/B schedule seems to contradict the positive influence of the block schedule suggested by Kerr (2002) and Marchant and Paulson (2001). The purpose of a block schedule is to provide students the opportunity for increased time with the teacher and the material, yet in reducing most content classes to every other day meetings, Summit has not provided this increased exposure.

After-School Classes

Summit could also provide additional time with the teacher and subject matter with after-school classes, which have been shown to improve achievement in at-risk students (Lauer et al., 2006). Because after school classes are funded differently than regular courses, Summit could consider offering additional sections of core courses after school. Approximately 130 students at the Complex already take the courses that are offered each six-week session, but beginning-level ELLs are not permitted to take these classes. Core courses specifically designed for ELLs could help students who fail core courses or who do not have transfer credits from their home countries in the necessary subjects. The students who fail their core courses during the regular school day are those most in need of extra help, but they are not provided any.

Improving Advisory

The school data strongly suggest that currently Advisory is not a meaningful class at Summit. Some teachers view it as just one more thing to do, and even the teachers who do believe in the potential of the class find following up on every student extremely time consuming. Ricardo was the only student who liked Advisory, though he did not comment on its usefulness. In the successful small schools described by Toch (2003), Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Wichterle Ort (2002), Levine, (2002) and others, teacher-advisors were responsible for only about 12-15 students. This reduced student load can make tracking down all of the details for students more manageable. Summit could consider ways to reduce the number of students in each Advisory class, such as having the principal and counselors take Advisory classes. Teachers' capacity to care about their students is limited, and doing all of the things that *caring about* implies for the students in their regular classes, as well as those in Advisory, is just not possible.

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Field Experiences and Other More Relevant Activities

The body of literature related to language acquisition and development (Cummins, 1991; Cummins & Sayers, 1997) as well as common sense, clearly shows that students can learn language and content/skills better with real-world contact than with lecture and textbook work. The data do not show that Summit students have many opportunities within their content classes to participate in these real-world experiences. Students spend most of their time engaged in seat work. Some independent or group book work is necessary in every class, of course. However, students' opportunities to participate in internships, field trips, or other real-world experiences are limited at Summit. Staff might consider reorganizing certain courses or units of study to provide these experiences. The smaller student numbers, fewer teachers, and the fact that teachers often have students in common, can make scheduling field experiences easier than in a large, comprehensive high school.

For Further Study

The findings of this study provide fertile territory for further exploration of many areas related to small schools, personalization, and English Learners. Potential research could contribute to what is known about teacher motivation, effective content-area instruction for ELLs, teacher training and hiring, and school organization, all within the environment of the small school.

At the individual level, future studies could explore what factors contribute to a teacher's willingness to make the effort to get to know students, then capitalize on that relationship to provide a better educational experience. A sense of personal agency is critical if teachers are to take on the challenges of supporting their ELL students, and more research is necessary to suggest how to best create and nurture that belief that one individual can impact another person's life. Similarly, additional studies could illuminate ways to create a sense of personal agency within students, so that they believe they are responsible for their own success, and are willing to do the hard work of school in an effort to achieve that success. Students who do not believe they can make something of their lives are unlikely to risk trusting an adult with their weaknesses and needs.

Because it is clear that state and federal credentialing requirements are not sufficient preparation for teachers of ELLs, more research is necessary to determine the best means of

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preparing teachers to meet the diverse needs of their students. It's possible that teachers of different content-areas need varying types of training, or that certain strategies for making content accessible to ELLs are more effective in specific content-areas. Especially interesting might be study of the training methods that are most effective for teachers with more than two or three years of experience in the classroom. Once these teachers have figured out how to handle classroom management, paperwork flow, and the myriad other non-teaching duties at school, they might be more able to focus on instructional methods and in reaching all of their students through SIOP or other means. Finally, research involving the training of principals and district staff to employ more qualified teachers with a strong sense of self agency in addition to high level competence with teaching methods, and who are thus more willing to face the difficulties of working in a small school with challenging students, could also be very valuable.

There are many avenues for further study regarding the structure or organization of a small school enrolling large numbers of ELLs. The most effective master schedule, including length of class periods, courses offered, and whether to include Advisory, is one particular area in which more data is urgently needed. Research regarding methods to make the best use of the shared space, the limited counseling time, to provide for rigorous interdisciplinary team projects, and facilitate more out of school experiences would also benefit teachers and students at small schools.

Summit's greatest strength is its resilient students. Though these young people face poverty, cultural, and immigration difficulties daily, yet they continue to come to school. In spite of their challenges in the content-area classroom, and the rudimentary support for their non-academic needs, Summit students report they like their teachers and the school. Students are not expecting the school to make allowances for them because they are learning English. They want to do the work; they just need support. This persistence in the face of often extreme obstacles demonstrates that Summit students are probably willing participants in any change that will help them achieve academically. Summit's challenge is to capitalize on this willingness and resilience to create a highly effective program for ELLs.

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APPENDIX A

DEFINITION OF TERMS

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Definition of Terms

Bilingual Crosscultural, Language. and Academic Development (BCLAD)

A certificate that allows the holder to teach English Language Learners, or deliver content area instruction within the content-area of the prerequisite teaching credential (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2006a).

California English Language Development Test (CELDT)

The examination that California gives to students whose home language is not English. The test for high school students covers listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Based on their score each section of the test, students receive a qualification of their English language proficiency. Proficiency levels, from lowest to highest, are *Beginning, Early Intermediate, Intermediate, Early Advanced,* and *Advanced* (California Department of Education, 2006a).

California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE)

Students must pass this examination to be eligible for graduation from a public high school in California. The test covers reading, writing, and mathematics (California Department of Education, 2006b).

Crosscultural, Language. and Academic Development (CLAD)

A certificate that allows the holder to teach English Language Learners within the content-area of the prerequisite teaching credential (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2006b).

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English Language Learner (ELL) or English Learner (EL)

An English Learner is a student with a home language other than English, who is not yet proficient in English (California Department of Education, 2006a).

English as Second Language (ESL)

At Summit, an English class specifically designed for English Learners at the lower levels of English proficiency, as measured by the CELDT test.

English Language Development (ELD)

At Summit, an English class designed for students at higher levels of English proficiency, as measured by the CELDT test.

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APPENDIX B

OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

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Observation and Interview Protocols

Classroom Observation

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

Date: Observ. # Teacher ID# Student ID #

Subject: ELA, Math, Science, History, Other

SIOP: Score from 1-4 for each item, based on observation

Preparation

1) Clearly defined content objectives for students
2) Clearly defined language objectives for students
3) Content concepts appropriate for age and educational background level of students
4) Supplementary materials used to a high degree, making the lesson clear and meaningful (graphs, models, visuals)
5) Adaptation of content (e.g, text, assignment) to all levels of student proficiency
6) Meaningful activities that integrate lesson concepts (surveys, letter writing, simulations, constructing models) with language practice opportunities for reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking

Building background

7) Concepts explicitly linked to students' background experiences
8) Links explicitly made between past learning and new concepts
9) Key vocabulary emphasized (e.g, introduced, written, repeated, and highlighted for students to see)

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Comprehensible Input

10) Speech appropriate for students' proficiency level (e.g., slower rate, enunciation, and simple sentence structure for beginners)

11) Explanation of academic tasks clear

12) Uses a variety of techniques to make content concepts clear (e.g, modeling, visuals, hands-on, activities, demonstrations, gestures, body-language)

Strategies

13) Provides ample opportunities for student to use strategies

14) Consistent use of scaffolding techniques throughout lesson, assisting and supporting student understanding such as think-alouds

15) Teacher uses a variety of question types throughout the lesson, including those that promote higher order thinking skills throughout the lesson (e.g, literal, analytical, and interpretive questions)

Interaction

16) Frequent opportunities for interaction and discussion between teacher/student and among students, which encourage elaborated responses about lesson concepts

17) Grouping configurations support language and content objectives of the lesson

18) Consistently provides sufficient wait time for student responses

19) Ample opportunities for students to clarify concepts in L1

Practical Application

20) Provides hands-on materials and/or manipulative for students practice using new content knowledge

21) Provides activities for students to apply content and language knowledge in the classroom

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22) Uses activities that integrate all language skills (i.e, reading, writing, speaking, and listening)

Lesson Delivery

23) Content objectives clearly supported by lesson delivery

24) Language objectives clearly supported by lesson delivery

25) Students engaged approximately 90-100% of the period

26) Pacing of the lesson appropriate to the students' ability level

Review/Assessment

27) Comprehensive review of key vocabulary

28) Comprehensive review of key content concepts

29) Regularly provides feedback to students on their output (e.g, language,content, work)

30) Conducts assessment of student comprehension and learning of all lesson objectives (e.g., spot checking, group response) throughout the lesson.

Total score____ % score_____

Notes:

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Classroom Observation Reflection

(to be completed immediately after observation)

1. What is the overall impression/feeling of the class? Give supporting examples.

2. Describe the extent to which student receives instructional/personal attention from the teacher. Use specific examples.

3. Does the student understand the information/task? Provide evidence/examples.

4. Does the student have a good rapport with the teacher? Provide examples.

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Student Interview Form, Initial Interview

Date: Student ID#

1. What do you think of your classes so far?
2. Do your teachers give you the same assignments your friends in the class get?
3. Do you know how the assignments will be graded? What does good work look like?
4. Do you think you're graded the same way on assignments as everyone else?
5. How does the teacher check to see if you have understood the information/assignments?
6. How do you know if you're finished with an assignment?
7. What does he/she do if you don't understand?
8. What happens if you don't do well on the assignment/test?
9. Do you feel like your teachers know you as a person?
10. What do you think makes a good teacher?
11. Do you have any contact with the teacher outside of class? Explain.
12. Please describe a time when your teacher gave you individual attention.

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Teacher Interview, Initial Interview

1. How would you describe your teaching style? Can you give me an example?

2. Do all students in one class get the same assignments? Are those assignments graded the same way?

3. How do you know which kind of directions to give to students—written, verbal, modeling, etc?

4. How do you know a student understands the information/task?

5. What do you do if the student doesn't understand the information/task?

6. Do you feel like you know your students as people? How did you get to know them?

7. For those that you do know well, does this make a difference in the way you teach them? Can you give me an example?

8. Please describe any contact you have students that is not specifically about your class.

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